



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

**Phillipstown Primary School
Cefn Rychdir Road
New Tredegar
NP24 6XE**

Date of inspection: February 2012

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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright 2012: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Context

Phillipstown Primary School is in the village of Phillipstown, near New Tredegar in the Rhymney Valley. The area is the most deprived area in the County Borough of Caerphilly and around the ninth most deprived in Wales. The school itself was built in 1912 and is in the middle of the village.

There are 129 pupils on roll between the ages of three and 11. There are 17 part-time nursery children within the reception class. The nursery is in a unit in the school playing areas.

Most pupils in the school come from economically disadvantaged homes. Forty-eight per cent of statutory age pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. This is a much higher proportion than local and national averages.

There are very few children from minority ethnic backgrounds. All pupils speak English at home and no pupils speak Welsh as a first language. All classes are mixed age classes.

The individual school budget per pupil for Phillipstown Primary School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3,421 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Caerphilly is £6,779 and the minimum is £2,494. Phillipstown Primary School is 13th out of 75 primary schools in Caerphilly in terms of its school budget per pupil.

The school was last inspected in March 2006. There have been significant changes in staffing since the last inspection. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2010 and a new headteacher in October 2011.

Phillipstown Primary School has entered into a trial federated arrangement with White Rose Primary School, with the headteacher leading both schools.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- pupils make very good progress in their time in school from low starting points;
- standards have improved significantly over the last three years;
- the quality of teaching across the school is good; and
- the nurturing and caring ethos provides a stable and stimulating environment for all pupils.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the clear vision of the senior management team is shared by all staff;
- the strategic planning focuses clearly on raising pupils' standards of attainment and wellbeing;
- there are effective systems in place to identify areas for development; and
- there is a proven track record in bringing about improvements throughout the school, especially in raising pupils' standards of attainment.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 develop more strategies to encourage pupils' regular and punctual attendance at school;
- R2 develop the provision for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension in key stage 2;
- R3 give pupils more opportunities to write at length across the curriculum in subjects other than in English, especially the most able pupils; and
- R4 develop governors' ability to monitor and challenge the school's performance effectively.

What happens next?

The school draws up an action plan, which shows how it will address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Standards at Phillipstown Primary School have shown an upward trend over the last three years. Most pupils make very good progress in learning from their starting point on entry baseline to Year 6. Most pupils enter the school with skills that are well below the national average for pupils of a similar age and many pupils have poor communication and social skills.

By the age of seven, most pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science compared with other those in similar schools. A few pupils achieve the higher than expected level (level 3) at the end of key stage 1.

By the age of 11, most pupils reach the expected level (level 4) in English. This is in line with pupils in other similar schools. Eighteen per cent of pupils achieved the higher than expected level (level 5) in 2010-2011. Between 2009 and 2010, most pupils reached the expected levels in mathematics and in science, although there has been a slight downwards trend in 2010-2011 in comparison with the situation in other similar schools.

Nearly all pupils with special educational needs achieve well against prior attainment and personal targets and they make good progress relative to their ability. Pupils entitled to free school meals make good progress and achieve their targets. Overall, at the end of both key stages 1 and 2, girls outperform boys. However, boys' achievement in both key stages has shown an upward trend over the last two years.

Most pupils recall previous learning very well and they make appropriate progress in new learning. Most pupils are able to explain their ideas and understanding clearly. Most pupils develop good phonic awareness and they make good attempts at sounding out and spelling unfamiliar words. Most pupils read competently for their age and they generally use appropriate expression and intonation when they read aloud. Many pupils read a good range of non-fiction as well as fiction books.

By the end of key stage 2, many pupils use a wide vocabulary and they write well in a range of forms. Most pupils structure their writing effectively and they show a good awareness of how to capture the reader's interest. However, pupils do not write in extended forms enough in subjects other than English.

Most pupils have appropriate numeracy skills overall and they apply well across different subjects, where there is the opportunity. Many pupils develop good skills in information and communication technology.

Standards of Welsh are good overall. Pupils in the Foundation Phase have generally good vocabulary. They are able to express themselves well in simple Welsh. However, pupils in key stage 2 do not build effectively enough on the good progress they make in the Foundation Phase.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Most pupils have healthy attitudes towards food, exercise and lifestyle. Pupils take part enthusiastically in a beneficial range of extra-curricular activities to support healthy living, including cookery club, gymnastics, dance clubs, rugby and football. All pupils feel safe in school and indicate that they receive good personal support.

Pupils collaborate well in pairs and in group activities, and show respect for others. They behave well. They show interest and enthusiasm for learning.

Attendance has improved a few percentage points from just over 87% in 2009-2010 to just over 90% at the end of the autumn term in 2012. Unauthorised absence has reduced from just below 6% to just below 5%. Nonetheless, attendance remains low when compared with that of similar schools and the school has not met its own target of 92%. Even with the introduction of strategies to encourage attendance, attending school punctually and regularly remains challenging for few pupils. There have been no exclusions in the last two years.

Pupils who are members of the school and eco-councils are actively involved in making decisions about many aspects of school life. Pupil councillors are proud of their role, and they take it seriously. Prefects and pupils trained to lead games at play times show excellent social and organisational skills, caring for younger members of the school at break times.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
-----------------------------------------------	-------------

Learning experiences: Good

The school provides good opportunities for learning. The taught curriculum has been carefully mapped out and it is delivered through relevant learning activities. The school has carefully planned the delivery of subject skills to ensure appropriate progression and coverage. Teachers plan effectively for the delivery of skills across the curriculum in lessons. However, the opportunities for pupils, especially more able pupils, to develop their skills in extended writing in subjects other than English are limited.

After-school and lunchtime activities provide a very positive addition to the curriculum. The school provides many opportunities for learning in the local community and beyond. The lunchtime cookery club and the Intergenerational Project, where pupils share activities with senior citizens in the community, are a particular strength. They have a positive impact on pupils' learning and social skills.

Teachers frequently model good Welsh language skills. However, opportunities for the pupils to practise these skills are not always fully exploited across the school.

The school has an effective eco-committee that monitors energy use, and works to minimise waste and to develop pupils' understanding of environmental issues. The planned curriculum provides interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of the role they and others play in their community and in the wider world.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good overall and teachers use assessment for learning techniques well to help pupils improve their learning. Pupils are well motivated as the result of well-planned, relevant and imaginative teaching activities. Teachers have good classroom management and they have high expectations of pupil behaviour throughout the school. Support staff work very well with teaching staff to ensure learning opportunities are of high quality.

Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to reflect on their own learning and to help their classmates in making judgements about their learning.

In the very few lessons where teaching is not as effective, the pace of lessons is too slow and teachers do not adapt the work enough to meet the needs and abilities of the pupils in all activities.

Teaching and support staff provide effective verbal feedback to pupils to help them to understand how they can make improvements. Teachers focus written feedback on the learning objective for the lesson and the next steps pupils need to take to improve their work. The new marking and assessment policy helps teachers to provide consistent feedback that helps pupils to focus on meeting targets for their individual improvement.

Effective procedures are in place for assessing and tracking pupil progress at individual, group and class levels. Teachers use assessment data well to inform the content of reports to parents and to identify areas of concern.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Provision for developing and supporting pupils' health and wellbeing is good. It has a positive impact on behaviour throughout the school. The school is a well-ordered and caring community with clearly understood expectations, rules and procedures. This provides a very good basis for effective teaching and learning. Celebration assemblies help pupils to focus clearly on what they are doing well as a school community and where they need to improve. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils make good progress in these areas.

The school liaises very well with a range of external agencies to support pupils with specific learning needs.

Good procedures are in place to deliver effective support for children with additional learning needs. The school is successful in identifying individuals and groups of pupils in need of additional support and in providing targeted support programmes. The school sets and reviews pupils' individual education plans appropriately. The use of pupil-friendly individual education plans is a good feature.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

Learning environment: Good

The school provides a caring and welcoming environment for all learners. Accommodation and learning resources are good. The classrooms are of a suitable size for the number of pupils. Some specialist areas, including for information and communication technology, food technology, library and music, provide a very good learning environment. Three-dimensional displays and wall paintings throughout the school create an exciting and vibrant atmosphere. The display work supports learning and celebrates achievement very effectively.

The school successfully encourages children to respect and celebrate diversity through SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) assemblies and as part of the personal and social education curriculum. The school is inclusive and all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. There is a positive, caring and supportive ethos throughout the schools. Teachers and support staff encourage all pupils to treat each other fairly and with respect. Pupils are actively encouraged to take on additional responsibilities through the school council, eco-committee, sports council and as play leaders.

The school has developed specific policies to ensure equal opportunities for all and positive strategies to address unacceptable behaviour. There are sound procedures in place for addressing and reporting discrimination.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
----------------------------------------------------------------	-------------

Leadership: Good

The recently appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision for the school and they convey the vision successfully to staff, governors and pupils. They are working effectively to build a collaborative and devolved style of leadership and they communicate well with staff. Managers have created effective strategies that are having a positive influence on pupils' standards and wellbeing throughout the school.

All members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. They work closely together to create an effective team. They develop their areas of responsibility well and they contribute positively to self-evaluation and whole-school developments. Teachers have a good understanding of the current priorities for development in the school improvement plan.

The governing body fulfils its statutory roles well. It is very supportive of the efforts to raise standards and has a good awareness of the school's current performance. However, the governing body does not take a prominent enough role in the school's self-evaluation and it does not scrutinise school performance data rigorously enough.

The school has responded well to many national and local priorities. It has addressed many of the principles of the School Effectiveness Framework, especially in the area of pupils' participation and partnership working. The school has also progressed well in the implementation of assessment for learning, thinking skills and other initiatives, such as sustainability and healthy eating. These initiatives are having a positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

Improving quality: Good

The school uses a wide range of procedures to evaluate the work of the school. The self-evaluation process clearly identifies the strengths and areas for development within the school. The school's self-evaluation procedure is based firmly on direct evidence and it fully involves the whole staff, parents and pupils.

The senior management team effectively monitors the teaching and learning within the classes, and curriculum leaders regularly undertake a wide range of focused monitoring activities. These include the scrutiny of teachers' planning, pupils' work, interpretation of data and focused 'learning walks'. The school tracks individual pupil progress closely. Teachers take appropriate action to ensure a clear, positive impact on provision and on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

The self-evaluation report is a comprehensive document that highlights clearly the strengths and areas that need to be developed further. The findings clearly inform the school improvement plan and priorities for development. The school improvement plan is an effective document, which targets the appropriate areas for development. Success criteria are identified and are measurable. However, a few of these are not specific enough.

The arrangements for the performance management of teachers are effective and lead to meeting teachers' professional training needs. Senior management, teachers and support staff share the most effective practices related to developing pupils' thinking skills, assessment for learning and tracking pupils' progress.

Effective networks of professional practice with its federated school, other schools and partners are developing well. They contribute effectively to the use of good practice at classroom and whole-school levels.

Partnership working: Good

The school works effectively with a wide range of partners. This has a beneficial effect on pupils' wellbeing and attainment.

There are very strong links with parents, which influence the success of children and the school. The school successfully engages parents through their involvement in such activities as learning logs and the production of topic maps that outline the term's work. The school's partnership with the 'Friends of the School' is good and they raise a significant amount of money to expand and improve the resources for the pupils.

The school works closely with other schools in the area on various projects and holds joint training with its federated school. A close and effective partnership exists between the school and the on-site pre-nursery setting. Transition arrangements from key stage 2 to the secondary school are effective and inclusive. Joint standardisation and moderation procedures between the school and the receiving secondary schools are well established.

There are close links with the local community, in particular through the Intergenerational Project where pupils learn about traditional games and develop new skills, such as knitting. These links have a positive influence on enriching pupils' experiences and the quality of education.

The school has effective partnerships with a range of external agencies, including the local authority's agencies, to meet the specific needs of individual and groups of pupils.

The partnership activities contribute very effectively towards widening the provision in the school and, as a result, they contribute very well to improving pupils' standards, social skills and wellbeing.

Resource management: Good

The school has a good range of resources for learning and teaching, which it uses effectively. Members of staff are well qualified and experienced. The school makes effective use of all staff to meet the needs of all pupils and to improve their wellbeing and their result.

Teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time is used well.

Through careful management of finances, the school has succeeded in investing extensively in developing the school's internal areas to provide specialist rooms and a stimulating learning environment.

As pupils at Phillipstown Primary School attain good standards and the school makes effective use of resources, the school offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The number of pupils in each year group in Phillipstown Primary School is small and varies considerably from year to year, so data needs to be treated cautiously.

Most pupils enter the school with skills that are well below the national average for pupils of a similar age. Many pupils have poor communication and social skills.

By the end of key stage 1, most pupils have made good progress. Most pupils attain the expected level (level 2) in English, mathematics and science in line with those of other schools within the family of schools. In English, in 2009-2010, there was a rising trend in pupils attaining the higher than expected level (level 3) in English, although this was just below the family average. In 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, pupils' standards in level 2 oracy exceeded family, local and national averages. In 2010-2011, pupils' standards in level 2 reading were above the family average, but below local and national averages.

By the end of key stage 2, most pupils reach the expected level (level 4) in English, mathematics and science. This is in line with the average for schools within the family of the schools, but below local and national averages. In English, there has been a rising trend in pupils' attainment in level 4 oracy since 2007-2008. This exceeds the average in the family of schools and it is just below local and national averages. There has also been a rising trend in pupils' attainment in reading at level 4 to just below the average in the family of schools.

Overall, boys' performance is lower than girls. There is no significant difference between the attainment of pupils who are looked after and those who receive free school meals with other pupils in the school.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parents' questionnaires

There is no commentary on the parent questionnaires due to the small number of responses received (fewer than 10) before the deadline for their collection.

Responses to learner questionnaires.

Forty-two pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire and most pupils are very positive about their experience of school. All agree that the school helps them to be healthy and that there are plenty of opportunities for them to be physically active. All feel that they are doing well at school. They feel that teachers and support staff help them to learn and make progress. Nearly all pupils say that they feel safe at school and that they know whom to talk to if they feel worried or upset, or have problems with their work. All pupils think that bullying is dealt with effectively. All pupils think that they have enough resources to do their work and that homework helps them to make progress. A small minority of pupils feel that other pupils' behaviour interrupts them and this sometimes prevents them from doing their work as well as they should. A very few pupils have concerns about other pupils' behaviour at lunch time and play times.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Penny Lewis	Reporting Inspector
Glyn Roberts	Team Inspector
Catherine Jenkins	Lay Inspector
Jonathan Wright	Peer Inspector
Graham Phillips	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (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' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FPYear 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	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	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:

Foundation Phase	Reception, 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

Glossary of terms – Primary

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.