



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

**Hawthorn Primary School
School Lane
Hawthorn
Pontypridd
CF37 5AL**

Date of inspection: January 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.

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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Context

Hawthorn Primary School is situated in the Hawthorn area of Pontypridd, which is in the Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. The school describes much of the area it serves as economically disadvantaged.

There are 239 pupils aged three to eleven years in the school. Pupils are organised into nine classes, some of which contain pupils of mixed ages. Almost all pupils come from homes where English is the main language. Approximately 28% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the local authority and the all-Wales average. The school has identified 23% of pupils with additional learning needs with one receiving a statement of special educational needs. Three pupils are looked after by the local authority. One child was temporarily excluded in the twelve months prior to the inspection.

Since the last inspection in 2006, the senior leadership of the school has changed, with a new headteacher and deputy headteacher joining the staff. In addition, a large number of other staff and governors have joined the school since 2006.

The individual school budget per pupil for Hawthorn Primary School in 2011-2012 is £2,904. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £6,499 and the minimum is £2,788. Hawthorn Primary School is 95th out of the 114 primary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of Hawthorn Primary School is adequate because:

- most pupils work well together and enjoy school;
- most pupils behave very well in classes and around the school;
- many pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points; and
- pupils' performance by the end of key stage 2 has improved significantly in the last year.

However:

- the performance of pupils in key stage 2 in English, mathematics and science over the last few years has often not compared well with that of pupils in other similar schools; and
- standards in Welsh and information and communication technology are still in need of improvement.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are judged as good because:

- Hawthorn Primary is an improving school;
- the school is well led and staff work well together as a team;
- there is a sound process for self-evaluation;
- there is a clear focus on priorities that relate well to improvements in standards and quality; and
- the school has made good progress in relation to the recommendations of the last inspection.

Recommendations

The school needs to improve:

- R1 the standards of and provision for pupils' Welsh language development and information and communication technology skills;
- R2 the overall coherence of the curriculum to ensure an appropriate balance of skills and content;
- R3 target setting arrangements for identifying and recognising pupils' progress; and
- R4 the role of governors in reviewing policies regularly and challenging the school.

What happens next?

Hawthorn Primary School will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

In key stage 1 in 2011, the performance of pupils was in the third quarter but has been consistently above the average for the family of schools over the last four years. Pupils generally achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics and their performance in these subject areas compares well with that of pupils in similar schools. However, pupils' performance at the higher level (level 3) is not as good.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance has been extremely variable over the last four years and has often not compared well with that of pupils in other similar schools. However, the outcomes of teacher assessments in 2011 indicate a significant upward trend in the performance of pupils placing them first in their family of schools for mathematics and science. Pupils' performance at the higher level (level 5) is not as good.

Pupils generally work productively in lessons and respond with enthusiasm to tasks set. Most pupils are developing their literacy skills well and use a range of appropriate strategies to improve their work. Most speak confidently and answer questions appropriately. Many pupils read well and with interest and older pupils are developing the skills to read expressively and with understanding. In information and communication technology (ICT), pupils are competent in a few areas such as word processing, but overall their range of skills is limited.

Most pupils work well independently and in groups to develop their skills and learning. They generate questions to further their inquiries and develop their investigations thoughtfully. In many classes, pupils reflect critically on their progress and assess their own work effectively against specific criteria.

Most pupils with additional learning needs achieve their agreed learning goals. More able pupils show initiative and are confident and motivated to learn. As a result, they achieve well and produce work of high quality. Pupils who receive free school meals generally make good progress.

All pupils listen and respond appropriately in Welsh to greetings and general instructions. They also make simple requests correctly to staff. However, beyond these activities pupils make little progress from year to year in their Welsh language development. Overall, by 11 years of age, pupils' speaking and listening, reading and writing skills in Welsh are not good enough.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and engage well with the tasks they are set. They are polite to adults and considerate of each other. Pupils behave very well in classes and around the school. In lessons, pupils are well motivated and settle quickly to their work. They work co-operatively with adults and other pupils to develop their thinking and to improve their learning.

Pupils generally feel safe in school and many feel that the school deals well with bullying. They also understand well how to develop a healthy lifestyle. Most pupils know about healthy eating and take regular for exercise. Older pupils run a daily tuck shop that serves healthy foods.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance has improved steadily over the last two years and, in 2010/2011, was higher than the national average and well above that for similar schools. All but a very few pupils attend punctually.

Pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities within the school, for example to act as playground buddies or to help younger pupils with their reading. The school council has contributed enthusiastically to improvements to the school environment. Pupils respond positively and responsibly to a number of opportunities to improve teaching and learning. For instance, they have taken part in 'learning walks' with staff and governors to help develop literacy strategies throughout the school. They have presented their findings to governors at governing body meetings.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Adequate

Teachers plan creatively together to design an integrated, exciting and engaging curriculum. They begin by seeking the views of pupils and, in doing so, respond very well to pupils' ideas and interests. Curriculum planning is developing well and is reviewed regularly, but it is not yet refined enough to ensure the appropriate balance of content and skills. For example, although science has been integrated into topic work enabling pupils to investigate in a way that relates to other learning, there are too few opportunities for them to develop progressively their skills in science.

Whole school planning for literacy underpins the learning experiences for all pupils and is having a positive impact on the progress they make. The school has made improvements in developing its provision for numeracy but these are not yet fully embedded across the school. Provision for information and communication technology is underdeveloped.

Pupils benefit from an appropriate range of activities within the community and further afield and these enrich the curriculum and enhance pupils' experiences. The school offers a good variety of extra-curricular activities that are popular with pupils and impact positively on pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Younger pupils in the Foundation Phase are provided with good opportunities to follow instructions in Welsh and to respond using simple Welsh phrases. They listen to stories by authors from Wales and learn new words in the Welsh language relevant to their daily life. Pupils throughout the school benefit from taking part in the annual eisteddfod and in some other celebrations. However, apart from these events, the school does not do enough with pupils in key stage 2 to build upon what they already know about Welsh culture and traditions and to improve their Welsh language skills.

Pupils have several opportunities to appreciate the importance of environmental sustainability and global citizenship. However, these are at an early stage of

development and consequently pupils' understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship is limited.

Teaching: Good

Overall, the majority of teaching is good. Within the Foundation Phase and generally in key stage 2, teachers and other adults stimulate and sustain pupils' interest and enjoyment in learning through a good range of purposeful activities.

Staff provide a good balance between adult directed activities and group, pair and individual work. Teachers generally plan well for pupils of all ages and abilities. However, planning for pupils' Welsh language development and for developing their information and communication technology skills lacks coherence.

Assessment for learning is generally well established throughout the school, particularly amongst the older pupils in key stage 2. Learning objectives and success criteria are shared with pupils at the start of each lesson and discussed at the end to enable pupils to recognise progress in their learning. Teachers often provide comments when marking pupils' work that indicate what pupils need to do to improve. Older pupils are also increasingly involved in commenting upon the work of other pupils in their group as a way of supporting and improving their work. Parents and carers receive appropriate information and reports on their child's achievements and wellbeing.

Teachers use an online assessment system to identify and target support for pupils. However, pupils are not yet involved enough in this process to enable them to recognise small but significant gains in their learning and to set realistic targets for improvement.

Teachers work well with their cluster of schools to produce portfolios of work to moderate and agree the levels awarded to pupils' work.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness is developing well in lessons, through the wide range of relevant extra-curricular activities and during acts of collective worship. Effective arrangements also exist to enable pupils to develop a healthy lifestyle.

Pupils benefit from effective professional support both from within the school and from specialist services. Vulnerable pupils are supported well through links with numerous agencies that provide helpful counselling services as and when required. The school also provides very good opportunities for pupils to meet as groups to discuss issues of common concern. Links with specialist agencies such as the school nurse, health services, the community police and social services are good and successfully promote pupils' health and wellbeing.

The school has an appropriate policy and has procedures for safeguarding. Inspectors have drawn the school's attention to a few specific issues of health and safety.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is generally appropriate. Staff identify pupils' learning needs at an early stage and generally provide them with appropriate support. Pupils' learning needs are also supported with well-written, child-friendly individual education plans and individual action plans that are regularly evaluated and updated. The recent withdrawal of the reading support programme from the Foundation Phase has led to a few pupils not receiving enough targeted support to improve their reading skills.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a fully inclusive, happy and friendly community. All pupils have opportunities to attend after-school clubs, join school committees and to participate in everything the school provides. The school has clear procedures for addressing oppressive behaviour.

The school accommodation is well ordered and managed. Staff provide a safe and very attractive environment for pupils' learning. Although the building is old it has been well maintained and extended to provide enough room for the number of pupils. The redevelopment of the Foundation Phase area has been particularly successful in providing sufficient space for a range of relevant activities for younger pupils.

There is a good range of outdoor learning and play facilities including a small allotment, pond and willow tunnel. These are used well to support pupils' learning.

Overall, there is an appropriate supply of learning resources although there are an insufficient number of computers to meet the needs of pupils and audio-visual resources to support the teaching of Welsh.

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

The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school and has high expectations. Since her fairly recent appointment she has achieved a great deal. Good leadership together with effective staff teamwork add to a very good whole-school ethos. This generally promotes improvements in provision and standards well. Effective senior management team meetings, staff meetings and a sound performance management structure also successfully help to improve learning and teaching.

The role of governors in supporting the school is developing well. Governors generally know about pupils' performance and how this compares with the performance of pupils in other similar schools. They also know about the strengths of the school and the areas it needs to further develop through, for example, the introduction of 'learning walks'. However, governors' involvement in reviewing policies regularly and challenging the school is not yet firmly enough established.

The school is making good progress in introducing a number of initiatives that meet local and national priorities such as the Foundation Phase, Assessment for Learning and the development of literacy. These are having a positive impact on pupils' standards of achievement.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation process draws on a good range of first-hand evidence. This evidence includes an analysis of the performance of pupils, regular observations of teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and regularly seeking the views of pupils and parents. The school has responded well to the views of pupils and parents and this has resulted in improvements. These include pupils becoming more involved in their own learning, the provision of a greater range of extra-curricular activities and better communication with parents.

The outcomes of self-evaluation are used to determine relevant priorities for school improvement that are contained in a clear plan. Implementation of the improvement plan is having a positive impact on provision and standards in the school with, for example, the effective development of literacy. The school has made good progress in relation to the recommendations of the last inspection.

The school is developing as an effective learning community. There are a number of professional learning communities within and outside the school that are having a positive impact on standards. Staff also collaborate with other local primary schools and the high school to enhance their professional knowledge of subjects, for example physical education.

Partnership working: Good

The school has an appropriate range of partnerships which it uses to build its capacity for continuous improvement. They include partnerships with parents, the local authority education service, the wider community including local businesses, housing associations, external agencies and the voluntary sector.

The partnership with parents is strong and most parents are happy with the provision at the school. Communication with parents has improved and regular newsletters, 'parent mail' and the school website keep parents well informed.

Partnerships with schools in economically developing countries such as in Uganda promotes pupils' knowledge and understanding of people and places and their traditions and cultures. Parents and visitors from the community make a positive contribution to enriching pupils' experiences both in school and in the locality.

Appropriate transition plans with the local secondary school include curricular and pastoral links. These are effective in helping older pupils to prepare for the next stage in their learning. There are good cluster arrangements for accurately standardising and moderating pupils' work in the National Curriculum core subjects. Joint observations of physical education lessons have been undertaken by school staff and the head of department in the local secondary school. This has resulted in better provision and improved pupils' standards in physical education.

Resource management: Adequate

The school manages its budget well and has adjusted spending very efficiently in response to recent changes of circumstances. There is a sufficient number of

qualified teachers and support staff and these are generally deployed effectively. The school identifies and meets the needs of all staff through well understood performance management procedures. There are very good arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and these enable teachers to work together on planning issues.

The school identifies and allocates appropriately resources in line with the priorities identified in its school improvement plan. There is generally a good range of learning resources that are managed and used well. Although the school has recently equipped all classrooms with new interactive whiteboards, there is an insufficient number of computers and laptops.

In view of the outcomes achieved by most of the pupils, the standard of care, support and guidance provided, and the efficient management of the budget, the school overall provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

Pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science in key stage 1 has generally compared well with that in other similar schools over the last four years but in key stage 2 pupils' performance has been more variable. As a result, the performance of pupils in key stage 2 has often not compared well.

In key stage 1, over the last four years the core subject indicator, the expected level in all three core subjects, has fluctuated and, in the last two years, has worsened. In 2011, 81% of pupils achieved the expected level (level 2) in all three core subjects. When compared with the situation in other similar schools, the overall performance of pupils is in the third quarter but is above the average for the family of schools. Performance is just above the local authority average but just below the all-Wales average.

Key stage 1 pupils generally achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics and, over the last four years, performance in these subject areas has been consistently above the family, local authority and all-Wales averages. In 2011, pupils' performance in these subject areas was the best in its family of schools.

Pupils' performance at the higher level (level 3) is improving in English but does not compare well in mathematics with that of pupils in other similar schools. In addition, significantly fewer pupils achieve the higher level in writing than in oracy or reading.

In key stage 2, pupils' performance has been extremely variable over the last four years with the school placed from the fourth to the first quarters. However, in 2011 a significant improvement in pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science compares very well with that of pupils in other similar schools and was the second best performance in the family of schools.

In English, pupils' performance was the second best in the family and in mathematics and science performance was the best in the family. However, pupils' performance at the higher level (level 5) is only just about at the family average and below the all-Wales average in English and science.

In key stage 1, almost a third more boys than girls achieved the expected level in English, mathematics and science. In addition, pupils in receipt of free school meals do not do as well as those that are not. In key stage 2, there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls or between the performance of pupils in receipt of free school meals and those that are not.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Learner questionnaires

Eighty-six pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire fully. Inspectors also talked to individual pupils and representative groups of pupils across the school. Nearly all pupils think that teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress and pupils know who to talk to if they find their work hard. In addition, most pupils know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. As a result, most state that they feel safe in school and many feel that they are doing well.

Most pupils feel the school teaches them how to keep healthy and nearly all feel that they have lots of opportunities to get regular exercise. Most pupils feel they have enough books and equipment and many state that homework helps them to improve their work in school.

About a quarter of pupils feel that the school does not deal well with bullying. In addition, almost a third of pupils feel that children do not behave well at break and lunchtimes and that the behaviour of others interferes with their work in class.

Overall, a majority of these views are generally in line with the views of pupils in other schools across Wales. However, more pupils in Hawthorn Primary express negative comments about the behaviour of other pupils. They are also more negative about the provision of homework and how well they feel they are doing in school.

Parent questionnaires

Twenty parents attended the parents' meeting and 19 parents completed the questionnaires. Overall, most parents feel the school is well run and nearly all express a great deal of satisfaction with the school.

Most parents state that their children were helped to settle into school when they first started and all feel that their children like school and are happy there. Most parents feel their children are safe in school. All parents feel that teaching is good and nearly all state that children are expected to work hard and are making good progress. Nearly all parents feel their children are becoming more mature and taking on responsibilities and are encouraged to be healthy. Many parents feel that there is a good range of activities in school and most feel that homework given is appropriate. Most also feel that their children are treated fairly and receive enough additional support with their individual learning needs. As a result, most parents state that children are well prepared to move on to their next school.

Most parents state that school staff are approachable if they have concerns or questions and many parents feel they well informed about their children's progress. A few parents do not feel that children behave well in school. Many parents are clear about what to do if they need to raise issues with the school or to make a complaint.

Overall, many of these views are in line with the views of parents in other schools across Wales. However, parents in Hawthorn Primary are not as positive about the safety of pupils or their behaviour in school.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Mike Maguire	Reporting Inspector
Sarah Lewis	Team Inspector
Edward Tipper	Lay Inspector
Jeff Jones	Peer Inspector
Lucy Noble	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.