

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 10 OF THE
SCHOOL INSPECTIONS ACT 1996**

**BIRCHGROVE INFANT SCHOOL
HEOL NANT BRÂN
BIRCHGROVE
SWANSEA
SA7 9L5**

SCHOOL NUMBER: 670/2087

DATE OF INSPECTION: 12-14 MAY 2003

BY

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DATE: 1 JULY 2003

UNDER ESTYN CONTRACT NUMBER: C/T/272/02P

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

A new nomenclature to describe pupils' progress through school was introduced in 1989. This system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to age 18 is intended to ease communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs and emphasise the importance of continuity.

The term "Reception" (R) is applied to the year group of pupils in a primary school (not a nursery class) who attain the age of 5 during the academic year "Year 1" (Y1) is applied to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on to Y13 the year group who attain the age of 18 during the academic year:

	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Years	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

Key stage 1 of the national curriculum consists of Y1 and Y2; KS2 of Y3 to Y6; KS3 of Y7 to Y9; KS4 of Y10 and Y11 (which is the final year of compulsory education).

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

The five-point grading scale used to represent the main judgements in this report is as follows:

1. Very good: many good features, some of them outstanding.
2. Good: good features and no major shortcomings.
3. Satisfactory: good features outweigh shortcomings.
4. Unsatisfactory: some satisfactory work but shortcomings in important areas.
5. Poor: many shortcomings.

LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE REPORT IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER :

ACCAC	-	Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales)
CD-ROM	-	Compact Disk Read Only Memory
CoP	-	Code of Practice
EBP	-	Education Business Partnership
EWO	-	Education Welfare Officer
GB-		Governing Body
ICT	-	Information and Communications Technology
IEP	-	Individual Education Plan
INSET	-	In-Service Education and Training
KS	-	Key Stage
LEA	-	Local Education Authority
LSA	-	Learning Support Assistant
NC	-	National Curriculum
PSE	-	Personal and Social Education
SDP	-	School Development Plan
SEN	-	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	-	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
WAG	-	Welsh Assembly Government
Y	-	Year

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PART 2: THE INSPECTION SCHEDULE

1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

The school is situated in the village of Birchgrove, an area on the outskirts of the city of Swansea. The main school is a semi-open plan building dating from 1970 and houses the older nursery, Y1 and Y2 pupils. Reception and younger part-time nursery pupils are accommodated in the old school building some 200 metres away. The junior school is attached to the main infant building and shares the communal kitchen. There has been a school in this area since 1862.

The school states that pupils come from an area that is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged; the intake is described as ranging from advantaged to disadvantaged. All pupils have participated in pre-school education and come from homes where English is the predominant language. Most transfer to Birchgrove Junior School for their KS2 provision. Currently, 31% of pupils are entitled to free school meals; this figure is more than for Swansea (21%) and for Wales (19.5%). The school has 58 pupils on its SEN register, of whom five are statemented.

The school states that it strives to achieve the highest standards in all aspects of its life, and that it provides a caring and supportive environment for its pupils based upon quality teaching and learning, integrity and teamwork. Its educational focus at present is to develop pupils' skills in writing and to assist their transition to KS2 in partnership with Birchgrove Junior School.

The school was last inspected in October 1997.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

This is a good school. It has a clear sense of purpose and direction, and its determination to raise standards and provide support and guidance for all its pupils is a major strength. It has made good progress overall since its last inspection.

- Pupils' standards of achievement across the school are very good in approximately 11% of the work seen, good in around 85% and satisfactory in about 4%.
- The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Standards in the nursery in the six areas of learning are as follows:

Language, literacy and communication skills	Good
Personal and social development	Good
Mathematical development	Good
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Good
Physical development	Good

Creative development	Good
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- Standards in reception in the six areas of learning are:

Language, literacy and communication skills	Good
Personal and social development	Good
Mathematical development	Good
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Good
Physical development	Good
Creative development	Very Good

- The standards of pupils' attainment in all the NC subjects and religious education are as follows:

	KS1
English	Good
Mathematics	Good
Science	Good
Welsh second language	Good
Design and technology	Very Good
Information technology	Good
History	Good
Geography	Good
Art	Good
Music	Very Good
Physical education	Good
Religious education	Good

- Standards are good in the key skills of listening, speaking, reading, numeracy and ICT, and are satisfactory in writing. However, planning for key skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall, although in numeracy it is good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school meets statutory requirements for collective worship.
- Behaviour and attitudes are good; pupils are respectful and most show self-discipline. Attendance levels and punctuality are satisfactory.
- Teaching in the school overall is good, with teaching standards in 100% of lessons being satisfactory or better, of which around 93% is good or very good. Teaching in the early years is good or very good in around 86% of lessons observed; it is satisfactory in the remaining 14%. In KS1 it is good or very good in about 95% of lessons observed and satisfactory in the remaining 5%.
- Assessment, recording and reporting are good overall. The arrangements for assessing work are good and teachers know their pupils well. Co-ordinators are well placed to develop their assessment of data to improve pupils' performance further and to impact

upon whole school development. Marking is thorough and constructive and targets are set to improve standards.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Subject and early years planning is thorough. However, there is no policy for PSE.
- The quality of support and guidance for pupils is very good; pupils are valued, safe and comfortable in a caring environment.
- The quality of provision for pupils with SEN is very good.
- The school has developed a good partnership with parents and community and other institutions and links with other schools are very good. Local groups and agencies offer good support, and satisfactory links overall have been established with industry through visits and sponsorship. The GB's annual report for parents, however, does not meet statutory requirements.
- The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is satisfactory. The SDP has many areas of development, is monitored and reviewed. However, it lacks structure and direction over the medium and long-term, and focus in the short-term. The self-assessment document commendably brings into focus aspects of school development; these areas are, in the main, short-term objectives. However, the document lacks an audit of standards and aspects of the school to best inform development decisions.
- The development and monitoring role of subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped and outcomes do not generally form part of the whole school self-evaluation and SDP process.
- Leadership and efficiency are good and there is a clear sense of purpose and direction in the school. Structures for day-to-day administration are good and the school runs efficiently.
- Staffing and the deployment of teachers are good. Resources are good overall and accommodation is satisfactory. Nursery pupils taught in the main school and pupils in KS1 enjoy facilities and resources that support effective teaching and learning, but nursery pupils taught in the old school lack comparable facilities and resources appropriate to their needs. Both nursery and reception pupils taught in the old school lack outdoor resources to further enhance their physical development. The school copes well with the organisational and management difficulties that arise from the split site accommodation.
- Staff are appropriately qualified and undertake INSET to develop aspects of their skills and teaching. However, some support staff do not assist pupils sufficiently to focus upon the objectives of the lesson or the tasks undertaken. Resources for teaching are good overall and are generally well used in lessons.
- Seven key issues were identified in the last inspection in April 1997. The school has made very good progress in the key issues of raising standards in subjects, where there were shortcomings, and in issues related to planning and schemes of work. It has made good progress in improving the quality of its SDP and in addressing matters related to the number of activities within some lessons. It has made satisfactory progress in

restructuring the length of sessions and improving the provision for outdoor play for nursery pupils taught in the main school.

- The school provides good value for money.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning

Pupils' standards of achievement across the school are very good in approximately 11% of the work seen, good in around 85% and satisfactory in about 4%.

- Standards in the early years are good overall. In the nursery standards are good in all six areas of learning; in reception they are very good in the creative aspects of the curriculum and good in all other areas.
- KS1 standards are very good in design and technology and music, and good in English, mathematics, science, Welsh second language, information technology, history, geography, art, music, physical education and religious education.
- In the NC KS1 assessment tests, the three-year rolling averages show pupils performing above LEA and national averages in mathematics, science and the core subject indicator, and above LEA and just below national averages in English. Boys in this period performed well above LEA and national averages in mathematics, science and the core subject indicator, and equal to these levels in English. Girls performed above LEA and national averages in mathematics and the core subject indicator, and above LEA but below national averages in English and science.
- When comparisons are made between the performances of Birchgrove's pupils in NC KS1 assessment tests and that of other schools in similar socio-economic areas in Wales, the results place Birchgrove in the top 25% of these schools in English, science and the core subject indicator. An improving trend in mathematics has brought the school into the top 25% banding in 2002.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress towards the targets set in their IEPs.

3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum

In key skills, standards in speaking, listening, reading, numeracy and ICT are good; in writing they are satisfactory.

- Planning for key skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall, although in numeracy it is good.
- Children in the early years are provided with a wide range of opportunities to develop, practise and apply their skills in literacy and numeracy across the six areas of learning. They make good progress and use ICT with increasing independence.

- In KS1, pupils' speaking skills are good in both English and Welsh. Most speak clearly and audibly when responding to questions, describing events and taking part in discussion. Most speak with confidence during drama performances and assemblies.
- Pupils' listening skills are good and most listen carefully, responding appropriately and effectively to what they have heard; they are courteous to staff and to each other.
- Pupils enjoy reading and their skills are good. By the end of the key stage, most read accurately, expressively and with understanding from a variety of sources.
- The performance of girls and boys in writing is below both local authority and national standards. However, for many pupils, presentation is generally good, although the writing lacks fluency. Opportunities for pupils to tackle an appropriate range of written work across the curriculum are developing as a result of the focus given to it within the SDP.
- Numeracy skills are well developed in other aspects of learning.
- In ICT pupils' understanding is promoted and extended through a wide use of a variety of technology.
- Work in art is used effectively to support other areas of the curriculum, and displays of pupils' work are used regularly to reinforce learning and teaching.
- Very good use is made of music to link with other subjects in the curriculum, such as language and art.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress in the development of their key skills, relative to their age and ability.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

- The school meets statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. A sense of wonder at the beauty of the natural world and concern for others around them is fostered among pupils.
- The school builds on pupils' home values and encourages them to reflect on their experiences and develop sound personal attitudes.
- The school values each individual and shows care and concern for their well-being and moral development.
- Pupils' knowledge of right and wrong is fostered throughout the daily life of the school. Their response to the guidance provided is very good.

- Pupils relate easily to staff and other pupils and adults, developing a sense of responsibility, pride in their work and consideration for others.
- Pupils' awareness of others less fortunate than themselves is promoted through fund raising events for charity.
- Knowledge and understanding of Welsh culture and language develops as part of the daily curriculum and, from an early age, pupils are introduced to festivals of other cultures such as the Chinese New Year.
- The provision for Welsh is supported by a firm emphasis on the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. Educational visits to places of interest and the attendance of a Welsh harpist further promote pupils' sense of pride and cultural identity.
- Racial issues and multicultural education are treated sensitively with pupils being encouraged to value the diversity in their society.

4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes

The overall standard of pupils' behaviour and attitudes is good.

- The good behaviour helps to create a school environment that values children as individuals and contributes to standards of achievement in a very positive way.
- Pupils move about the school in a quiet and orderly manner and behaviour in the dining hall and playgrounds is good. Behaviour within the classroom is also good reflecting the positive interest and enthusiasm with which the majority of pupils approach their work, as well as their ability to sustain concentration.
- The school follows the LEA behaviour support plan and concentrates on developing the values of mutual respect, self-discipline and social responsibility through the example set by adults within the school. This is supported by an active partnership with parents who are constructively involved at an early stage when a pupil has failed to respond to a sanction imposed by a teacher.
- While the school does not have a specific anti-bullying policy, it is fully aware of the need to be vigilant over such matters. However, parents and staff do not consider it to be a problem within the school.
- No pupils have been excluded in recent years.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance is satisfactory averaging just below 92% (excluding the nursery) during the last academic year.

- The registers are diligently completed in accordance with WAG guidelines. However, there is an inconsistency in the way different teachers record the reasons for absence.

- The school does not set targets for improving attendance and there is little focus within the school, such as through wall displays or a pupil reward system, to encourage pupils to attend more regularly.
- The head is well aware of the small number of pupils with particular attendance and punctuality problems and works in close co-operation with the EWO to improve their individual situations.
- The failure of a number of pupils to arrive promptly for the start of the morning session can cause disruption to learning at the beginning of the school day.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

Teaching in the school overall is good, with teaching standards in 100% of lessons being satisfactory or better, of which around 93% is good or very good.

- Teaching in the early years is very good in around 15% of lessons observed; it is good in about 71% and satisfactory in the remaining 14%. In KS1 it is very good in about 20% of lessons observed, good in approximately 75% and satisfactory in the remaining 5% of lessons.
- Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and learning occurs in a relaxed and friendly environment. Pupils' progress is effectively monitored in the classroom, and appropriate attention is given to differentiation through the use of varied tasks and graded worksheets.
- Lessons are prepared thoroughly in all classes. Resources and materials are available and ready at the beginning of lessons.
- A wide variety of teaching strategies, such as whole class teaching, group and partner work, research tasks and individual study, are used to good effect.
- When teaching is good or very good, lessons start purposefully and pupils know what is expected of them in the given time. Teachers capture pupils' interest imaginatively and have very good subject knowledge. Tasks are challenging and well matched to differing abilities. Pupils are given opportunities to think for themselves and good planning allows the lesson to move forward systematically and at a good pace. At the conclusion of lessons, teachers reinforce the key purposes.
- In lessons judged to be satisfactory, some teachers do not engage all pupils, and time is occasionally not well used or spent in settling pupils to focus upon the tasks set; introductions are too long, insufficient time is given to pupils to enable them to work independently, and there is no review of what has been learnt at the end of the lesson.

5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

The quality of assessment, recording and reporting is good overall.

- Teachers know pupils very well and are aware of their abilities and difficulties.
- Children under five are assessed according to the LEA baseline test; the school analyses these results and responds, in consultation with parents, to issues that may arise.
- In KS1 teachers mark pupils' work regularly and most comments provide guidance for further improvement.
- Assessments of pupils are undertaken in both core and foundation subjects. The effectiveness of this information in informing planning for further development is at an early stage of development.
- Information obtained from assessments, including the NC statutory assessments and standardised tests, is used to improve performance and to raise standards. However, assessment outcomes have limited impact upon whole school development.
- Termly assessments of pupils' progress are recorded in individual 'Record of Personal Achievement' folders. These are of a good standard and celebrate pupils' successes.
- Termly targets, both curriculum and non-curriculum based, are set for all pupils; these are shared and discussed with parents.
- Parents are happy with the arrangements for visiting the school to discuss their children's work.
- Annual reports to parents meet statutory requirements. They convey a clear picture of pupils' attainments and provide direction for their development.

5.3 Curriculum

The curriculum is broad and balanced.

- The curriculum for children under-five is appropriate to their needs and planning is good. There are clear objectives for the progress of three and four year olds and there is a balanced approach to the six areas of children's learning. Younger nursery children taught in the old school make limited progress in their skills of climbing, balancing and control of large outdoor-wheeled toys, because of the lack of access to suitable facilities.
- Policies are in place for all statutory subjects. The curriculum is developed through schemes of work and termly curriculum plans which are assimilated into lessons with specific learning objectives. Class teachers prepare activities based on learning objectives, differentiation and resources required.

- The planning of the curriculum and its organisation in terms of time allocation to subjects and grouping arrangements for pupils is appropriate and provides good opportunities for continuity and progression.
- Overall, the curriculum is appropriate to the needs, interests and abilities of pupils and is equally accessible to all. Progression is evident as pupils move from class to class and year to year.
- Co-ordinators are in place for all NC subjects and religious education. They have a very good evidence base of curriculum coverage and pupil achievement, and the support offered to teachers is effective.
- There is no policy for the development of PSE across the curriculum. However, all staff develop this aspect and are familiar with the ACCAC guidance.
- The curriculum is enriched through visits and visitors. Pupils benefit from the specialist skills of teachers within the school in respect of art, ICT and music and by the peripatetic athrawes fro.
- The extra-curricular science club, in particular, develops and enhances the curriculum.
- Most parents and pupils value homework; it is regularly given and marked by teachers.

5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

The provision for support, guidance and pupils' welfare is very good.

- The school provides a safe and happy environment, where the needs of pupils are given high priority.
- The pastoral support of the school is very good. Staff convey a positive, friendly approach that demonstrates genuine concern for the pupils in their care.
- Pupils' health education and personal development are promoted by helping them to understand the importance of looking after themselves and their environment.
- Personal issues are dealt with sensitively and child protection procedures and arrangements for supporting children's medical needs comply with national and local guidelines.
- The response of pupils to the guidance offered by staff is very good.
- Rewards and sanctions are clearly known to pupils and strategies are appropriate for their age; younger pupils are positively praised and encouraged.
- Good manners are emphasised and all forms of discrimination are effectively discouraged.
- The lunchtime session is a pleasant social occasion.

5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN

Provision for pupils with SEN is very good.

- Thirty-eight pupils (21%) are identified by the school as requiring SEN support; all are integrated within mainstream classes and have full access to the NC. Five pupils have statements, 16 are categorised within Early Years Action, four within Early Years Action Plus, 30 on School Action and eight on School Action Plus.
- The school's policy for pupils with SEN is in accordance with the CoP and conforms to statutory requirements. Documentation is thorough and there is good liaison between class teachers, support staff, parents and outside agencies. IEPs are thorough and relevant.
- SEN provision and practice are well co-ordinated and show a commitment to inclusion. Progress of all pupils is reviewed regularly.
- Staff know pupils well and early identification of SEN arises from careful observation, discussion and assessment.
- Staff concerns and assessment information are reviewed systematically at termly workshops arranged by the SENCO.
- There are strong links with the local authority that provides specialist support. Arrangements for in-class and withdrawal teaching are appropriate and pupils benefit from work that is well matched to their needs.
- All pupils at the school are involved in self-evaluation of their work that makes a valuable contribution to the assessment process. Parents are consulted regularly on the progress and targets for their children.
- Up to date information on SEN is acquired from relevant journals and two teachers have benefited from recent training that has subsequently been disseminated through school INSET.
- New initiatives are implemented continually and effective systems are in place to enable pupils to achieve their potential.
- Liaison with Birchgrove Junior School has proved beneficial in ensuring consistency in practice.
- The GB member with designated responsibility for SEN is enthusiastic and liaises closely with the SENCO.

5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions

The school's partnership with parents, the community and other institutions is good and with other schools it is very good.

- The quality of information provided for parents, especially the new website, is good. However, the GB's annual report for parents does not meet statutory requirements.
- There is active encouragement for the involvement of parents in the life of the school; eight of them regularly assist in the classroom. The Home-School Association is very effective in organising fund raising events. The home school agreement has been sent to all parents and signed by them.
- The 'open door' policy allows parents daily access to the teachers and they are welcome to meet the head on an appointment basis. Every class has an 'open evening' each term at which pupils' progress is discussed and simple targets agreed. At the one held in the summer term, parents are presented with their child's annual report. They are appreciative of the opportunities for them to meet staff and to discuss their children's progress.
- The school has developed some good links with people from the local community such as the curate, community fire officer and senior citizens. Also, trips by pupils to areas of their local community, combined with visits from individuals, such as a local historian and a musician, contribute to their knowledge and understanding of their local environment.
- The school has regular contact with fellow cluster schools in the Birchgrove Education Partnership. It has also developed a particularly close working relationship with the adjoining junior school. This includes co-operation between curriculum co-ordinators, teachers taking lessons in each other's school and a programme of exchanges for pupils between the two schools.
- Partnerships exist with two initial teacher training institutions and the school also provides opportunities of work experience for students from local secondary schools and further education colleges. All these initiatives have a positive impact on the quality of provision in the school.

5.7 Partnership with Industry

Partnership with industry is satisfactory.

- There are some good links with local commercial companies, mainly through the Home School Association, which makes donations and provide resources. However, there are no formal links with organisations such as the EBP.
- Some individuals visit the school to discuss their occupations and pupils visit a local supermarket to reinforce their understanding of weights and measures. Apart from this, however, little has been done to enrich the quality of learning of pupils through links to the world of industry and commerce.

- Opportunities afforded by partnerships with business to enhance the personal development of staff have not been exploited.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is satisfactory.

- The self-assessment document presents seven areas of development. These are mostly within the SDP schedule for completion by Spring 2003. The document is commendable in that it brings into focus key aspects of development, but it lacks an audit of standards and aspects of the school to best inform development decisions.
- The SDP 2002-2005 concentrates on identifying the short-term needs of the school. It contains reference to areas of improvement, criteria for evaluating success, responsibilities for monitoring, time scales, training needs and cost. Monitoring and evaluation of the targets is carried out. Development areas are substantial, but in the main do not reflect the priorities identified by subject and aspect co-ordinators. The lack of medium and long-term planning limits the future vision for the school.
- There is a range of procedures to evaluate aspects of standards achieved by pupils. However, evaluation is limited to end of KS1 achievements and value-added judgements in some curriculum subjects.
- Subject and aspect co-ordinators are in place for all NC subjects and have a good understanding of their curriculum area and responsibilities. However, their development and monitoring role is underdeveloped and outcomes do not generally form part of the whole school self-evaluation and school development plan process.

6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

The quality of leadership and efficiency is good.

- The school displays a positive ethos and a clear sense of purpose and direction. Its aims and values are explicit and there is a commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- The head provides the school with good leadership in all aspects of school life.
- Good structures are in place for the day-to-day running of the school, which operates efficiently.
- The strategic management of financial resources is good with spending linked to stated educational objectives within the SDP. The GB efficiently evaluates spending decisions to ensure best value for money. An independent audit of the school's financial administration is scheduled for June 2003.

- The GB is well informed, supportive and clear in its determination to effect improvement.
- The school gives good value for money.

6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

Staffing and deployment of teachers are good. Resources are good overall and accommodation is satisfactory.

- The school is appropriately staffed for the number of pupils.
- The support teacher and peripatetic teachers make a good contribution to pupils' learning and to the life of the school. The secretary, cleaners, caretaker, canteen staff and lunch-time supervisors perform their roles effectively and with commitment.
- Staff have job descriptions. However, the quality of the job descriptions for LSAs limits their effectiveness in supporting pupils' learning.
- Teachers are suitably qualified and good use is made of the expertise of individuals to exchange classes, for example, in music.
- The support given by the advisory service is good. The athrawes fro visits the school once a fortnight to teach classes and to advise teachers.
- Some support staff provide valuable assistance for pupils' learning, but the quality and deployment of others is unsatisfactory. There is a need to provide training and to review the deployment of the latter in order to maximise their impact in raising standards.
- Considerable effort has been made to ensure the school is welcoming and an effective environment for learning.
- The quality of access for disabled pupils that may request admission is satisfactory. However, movement between the split sites could be problematic.
- The school copes well with the organisational and management difficulties that arise from the split site accommodation.
- The school is kept clean and tidy and pupils show respect for the building.
- Early years, Y1 and Y2 pupils have separate yards. There is a need to improve the outdoor resources available to the reception class and the two-term, part-time nursery children taught in the old school building to further enhance their physical development. Recent drainage problems have damaged the Y1 and Y2 yards; these are scheduled for re-surfacing during the summer vacation.
- Resources in all subjects are good overall. Nursery pupils in the main school and pupils in KS1 enjoy facilities that support effective teaching and learning, but nursery pupils taught in the old school lack comparable facilities and resources appropriate to their needs.

Resources are stored well and are looked after. The Home-School Association contributes money for various curriculum requirements.

- The recent provision of an interactive whiteboard is further enhancing ICT access, confidence and skill levels among pupils.
- ICT resources are good and are being developed to enhance provision further and to provide the opportunity to raise standards.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

Provision for the under-fives

The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

Nursery

Standards in language literacy and communication skills are good.

Good features

- Children listen well, demonstrate a good vocabulary and develop confidence in speaking about their experiences. They enjoy stories and recall the characters and events in follow-up activities. They engage in role play imaginatively in the flower shop. They enjoy mark making and produce invitations, shopping lists, bills and receipts, showing good ability to form letters on their own.

Standards in personal and social development are good.

Good features

- Children share equipment well and work co-operatively in pairs and small groups at activities of their choice. They begin to take responsibility for their personal hygiene and for dressing themselves after a physical activity session in the hall. They display good social skills at snack time and become familiar with nursery routines.

Standards in mathematical development are good.

Good features

- Younger children are able to match objects by colour and develop a good understanding of size through stories such as 'Titch', dressing dolls of different sizes and activities with different sized containers in sand and water. Older nursery children can count to ten and recognise patterns of twos in different colours. In the water trough they use appropriate vocabulary to describe whether containers are full or empty. Recognition of small

numbers and understanding of the mathematical concepts of more, less and the purpose of money are demonstrated in the class shop.

Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are good.

Good features

- Children know about the work of the fireman and policeman who visit the school. They become familiar with the concept of time through the sequence of daily events. They exercise their natural curiosity when they investigate fruits, find the seeds inside and experiment with growing them. They carry out simple cooking activities that require them to mix ingredients, note changes and predict what effect heat or cold will have.

Standards in physical development are good.

Good features

- Children move confidently and show awareness of space. They understand and respond well to vocabulary linked with movements. Older children show increasing skill at climbing, balancing and using wheeled toys competently. Small equipment, such as pencils and plasticine, are used with increasing control.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings, but younger nursery children taught in the old school make limited progress in their skills of climbing, balancing and control of large outdoor-wheeled toys, because of the lack of access to suitable facilities.

Standards in creative development are good.

Good features

- Children enjoy painting and begin to learn about mixing colours. Using a range of materials, they create good representational images of creatures such as ladybirds.

Reception

Standards in language, literacy and communication skills are good.

Good features

- Children speak well and talk enthusiastically about their experiences. They listen attentively, follow a story intently and begin to recognise words and letter sounds. They handle books correctly and know that pictures and words convey meaning. A few are able to read a simple sentence correctly and copy it. The majority can write their names independently.

Standards in personal and social development are good.

Good features

- Children know school routines well, become increasingly independent; they play together well in classroom activities and in the playground. They undertake small responsibilities eagerly, wait their turn, share a social occasion together in a relaxed way at snack time and relate well to other children and adults. Their knowledge of the Welsh language develops well through exchanging greetings in Welsh daily, talking about the weather and singing simple Welsh songs.

Standards in mathematical development are good.

Good features

- The majority of children recognise and order numbers from zero to ten, possess a good mathematical vocabulary and have a good grasp of the concept of number. They understand that adding makes numbers bigger and taking away makes them smaller. Some understand and can work out one more or one less. A few can count and write numbers to 20.

Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are good.

Good features

- Children gain an insight into the work of the postman when they play in the class post office; they learn how to write a letter. They show great interest in living things, examine flowers under a magnifier, sort flowers into different categories and suggest new categories themselves. Many know that living things need water, food and air to live. Awareness of the recycling process is evident as they save their waste paper in the classes and make a good attempt at explaining why they do this. They demonstrate very good skills at using the computer to produce pictures linked with their topic work.

Standards in physical development are good.

Good features

- Children show good awareness of space and their body movements are well co-ordinated. They handle small equipment, such as felt pens and scissors, with good control and the majority can fit together puzzles and construction equipment correctly.

Standards in creative development are very good.

Good features

- Children use a range of colours and media to produce detailed pictures of people they know. They enjoy dressing up to take on the roles of familiar story characters. They discuss their own work with enthusiasm and begin to appreciate the work of others. They show a real enthusiasm for musical activities and their music making skills are a very good feature of their creative development. They experiment independently with musical instruments during free play and are familiar with the names of a wide range of percussion ones. In organised activities they can give the correct names of hidden instruments when they are played and select appropriate ones to accompany action words

in familiar songs. They sing exceptionally well, with clear diction and a good response to instructions to vary the volume and speed of their performance.

English

Standards are good overall.

Good features

- Standards in speaking and listening are good. Most pupils speak confidently and clearly; they communicate ideas effectively and offer opinions readily; they listen attentively to adults and to other pupils. Drama and role play make an important contribution to oracy skills and pupils enjoy taking the lead roles in whole school assemblies.
- Standards in reading are good and most pupils use a range of methods and strategies to read new words. The majority make good progress in the fluency and accuracy of their reading. This progress is supported by class reading of Big Books and partnered reading activities. During shared reading sessions many pupils read confidently and involve themselves purposefully in the discussion of the text. They select books from a wide range available at the school; most can offer opinions about what they read and many understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction.
- Teachers listen regularly to pupils reading and encourage positive reading attitudes. Pupils take their reading books home every day and a dialogue between parents and the school is encouraged. A variety of books in each 'story bay' area of the class are displayed in an attractive manner. A lending library has been set up with parental help.
- Many pupils understand the basis of sentence structure and some can write pieces of prose and poems with fluency and accuracy. The majority can summarise a story systematically and are aware of the sequence of events; they know that stories must have beginnings, middles and endings.
- Attention is paid to spelling, with effective use of phonic work to provide reinforcement for younger pupils. Appropriate emphasis is placed on word banks, spelling mats and dictionaries to assist pupils with vocabulary.
- Big Books are used to introduce and reinforce punctuation. Written work shows a growing awareness of the need for simple punctuation marks.
- Building on their work in reception, pupils make steady progress in the development of their handwriting skills.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress in developing their language skills in line with the targets set in their IEPs.

Mathematics

Standards are good.

Good features

- Many pupils discuss their work using appropriate mathematical language and are able to use their mathematical skills in a range of activities.
- Pupils increasingly represent their work using symbols and diagrams.
- Many pupils confidently respond to questions requiring them to state what happens next. Some are able to suggest alternative ways to overcome a problem and are able to check their completed work.
- Many pupils count sets of objects reliably and are able to operate confidently within a 100 square counting forwards, backwards and in sequences.
- Some pupils can select the appropriate operation when solving addition and subtraction problems and are able to understand place value and use this to order up to 100. They are able to use mental recall of addition and subtraction facts up to 30.
- Some pupils can identify and use halves and quarters and can recognise sequences using odd and even numbers.
- Many pupils have a good understanding of number bonds, simple fractions and basic shapes and their properties. They understand time at the appropriate level and use mathematical language well in this respect. With some support they use ICT to present findings and assist calculation.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings, but the copying of a written question prior to its calculation limits the time available for mathematical activities for some pupils.

Science

Standards are good.

Good features

- Most pupils accurately describe simple features of investigations and many are able to make comparisons when describing their observations; some are able to explain their observations.
- Many pupils effectively communicate their activities and findings by talking about them. They use simple charts accurately and most are able to use a basic table to record their results.
- Pupils use equipment safely and to a purpose.
- Many pupils are able to respond to ideas and make their own simple suggestions. Some are able to predict and subsequently comment on whether what happened was what they expected.

- Some pupils are able to observe, measure and record data using simple equipment, tables and charts.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings, but the communication of findings in writing is limited.

Welsh second language

Standards are good.

Good features

- The use of incidental Welsh is very good throughout the school; pupils respond confidently in Welsh when the attendance and dinner registers are called. They answer greetings and understand instructions.
- Pupils speak with good intonation and pronunciation and respond enthusiastically to the very good model of speech provided by teachers. They listen well and can follow instructions.
- Pupils enjoy stories from Welsh Big Books and make very good attempts to read the texts, including dialogues, aloud together. They understand them and take part in role play situations when they are able to substitute their own vocabulary for that in the text within a familiar sentence pattern. By the end of Y2 some pupils achieve very good standards in oral work.
- Most pupils can write familiar words, phrases and basic sentences. The majority complete worksheets correctly, when they label body parts and clothes, and they are confident when writing sentences about themselves and their likes and dislikes. Some can write a simple dialogue. They make regular and very good use of individual Welsh work books.
- Pupils know a wide selection of Welsh songs and are given regular opportunities to perform these during school functions and in the weekly Welsh assembly.
- A wide range of materials, which includes fiction and some non-fiction books, dictionaries, teacher prepared games and cassettes, enhances pupils' learning, which is also supported effectively through the use of CD-ROMs.
- The school has a very positive Welsh ethos and all teachers are enthusiastic about teaching the language and they make it an enjoyable experience. It is given prominence in signs and displays around the school, providing further opportunities for the promotion of pupils' learning.

Design and technology

Standards are very good.

Good features

- Pupils think of ideas and explain through words and pictures what they want to do. Their experience in handling materials allows them to generate further ideas to improve their design. Very good classroom displays and a wide range of resources provide ideas and information to support effective learning.
- Pupils are able to confidently select from a range of materials and tools. They are able to explain what is being made, what is being used and the choices that they have made. They are able to join materials in a variety of ways.
- Some pupils are able to design whilst taking account of specific requirements.
- Pupils are able to draw upon the expertise of the design and technology co-ordinator to enhance their design and improve their making skills.
- Some pupils are able to label sketches to communicate details of their design and identify adaptations that can be made to their work.
- Health and safety issues are clearly identified by staff; pupils are clear about the need to handle tools safely.

Information technology

Standards are good.

Good features

- Most pupils are able with support to use ICT to assemble text and symbols to help communicate ideas. They confidently use the mouse and keyboard and can choose from the menu on the screen.
- Pupils confidently explore commercial ICT software and are able to produce art, plans, graphs and text, supported by inserted pictures.
- Many pupils are able with support to use ICT to sort and classify information and to present their findings.
- Many pupils are able with support to save and retrieve their work.
- Some pupils are able to generate and edit their work on screen, as well as to describe their use of ICT and its application in the outside world.
- Some pupils are able to access information independently on the world wide web, and with support bring this information into their classroom activities.

- Some pupils are able to use commercial software models or simulations to help them make decisions and are aware of the consequences of their decisions.

History

Standards are good.

Good features

- Most pupils develop a sound understanding of how changes occur over time. They demonstrate an awareness of the passing of time by using the correct everyday language.
- Pupils develop an awareness of the difference between past and present, when they compare their parents' and grandparents' forms of entertainment with their own. They contrast toys from the past to those used in the present day and discuss similarities and differences and make a toy 'time line'.
- Pupils learn about famous people from the past who made changes that affect our lives today.
- Appropriate attention is given to stories and discussion about famous characters in the history of Wales.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the local area is well developed. They explore and observe the school and look at differences in nearby old and new buildings.
- Artefacts and photographs are used effectively to provide first hand experiences and to develop research skills. Pupils benefit greatly from visits by a local historian.
- Educational visits to sites connected to the study of history consolidate pupils' understanding and help them develop historical enquiry skills.

Geography

Standards are good.

Good features

- Pupils show good recall of earlier work in relation to rural and seaside areas. They can name other places in the locality and further afield.
- Good use is made of pictorial resources to compare and contrast the countryside around Birchgrove with the seaside.
- The majority of pupils can identify key features in the village of Birchgrove and the surrounding area and produce a simple picture map of the village.

- Older pupils develop a good understanding of the causes of pollution and the effect on the environment. They show a responsible attitude in their suggestions to help keep the environment clean.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings, but reference to globes and maps to locate Wales and other countries is underdeveloped.

Art

Standards are good.

Good features

- Pupils undertake a balanced programme of art, craft and design activities that build on previous skills.
- Pupils experience working with a range of media, including clay, paint, pencils, crayons, chalk and charcoal; they make batik in the style of Alison Mercer.
- Pupils experiment with colours and understand that it is possible to create lighter and darker shades by mixing colours; they select naturally found objects in the environment and use them as a stimulus for producing simple repeat patterns.
- Appropriate opportunities for observational drawings are given. Pupils draw still life pictures of items of food and of various forms of lighting and shapes.
- Pupils have experience of three dimensional art; for example, they make models of bird feeders and design and make Easter bonnets.
- Some pupils use computer programs to create an effective image.
- Pupils have worked with a local artist to produce attractive stained glass work in the school foyer. They have created a mural depicting their school with the help of an artist in residence.
- Pupils are able to choose from a selection of good resources and use the correct materials and tools.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings, but pupils' awareness of Welsh artists is insufficiently developed and the use of computer aided art and design is limited.

Music

Standards are very good.

Good features

- Pupils perform confidently in singing and instrumental music and are familiar with musical terminology to which they respond appropriately. They demonstrate a good understanding of beat and rhythm in their performances in year groups and whole school sessions.
- Pupils compare and contrast sounds, develop ability to choose the best sound effects to represent their ideas and combine them with body percussion to accompany songs and poems.
- Pupils develop skills in composing pictorial scores for instrumental work. Their compositions are appraised constructively and occasionally they record their work in order to evaluate their performance more fully.

Physical education

Standards are good.

Good features

- Many pupils are able to explore different activities with increasing confidence and control, practising to improve their techniques or movements. They are able to develop their movement with a partner and produce a short series of linked actions.
- Most pupils are able to work safely with others when using games equipment and gymnastic apparatus. They are aware of space and ways in which to work safely.
- Some pupils show greater control with improved tension and clearer shape.
- Good use is made of examples of good practice to inform the work of other pupils.
- Pupils play simple rule games fairly together with a positive response for the winning team.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings, but pupils do not regularly communicate their ideas about their movements and performance was limited.

Religious education

Standards are good.

Good features

- Pupils show good recall of Bible stories from which they learn to understand morals.
- Pupils discuss their own personal feelings and values, learn to appreciate the feelings of others and recall acts of kindness and unkindness.
- Pupils' understanding is enhanced when they re-enact Bible stories in role play situations.
- Knowledge of Christian and other faiths is gained from a good range of artefacts and information resources at the school.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

The inspection in October 1997 recorded that the school needed to:

1. Improve standards in subjects where there are shortcomings.
2. Produce a scheme of work for design and technology; complete the scheme of work for physical education; adapt the scheme of work for early years to reflect more closely the desirable outcomes for children's learning; ensure that the schemes of work provide consistent guidance for staff.
3. Produce a SDP with clear targets for improvement and criteria for success.
4. Rationalise the amount of planning undertaken by teachers and ensure that the short term plans have clear learning objectives.
5. Reduce the number of activities within some lessons.
6. Restructure the length of sessions.
7. Improve the provision for outdoor play, especially in the nursery.

In reviewing these key issues, the May 2003 inspection concluded that:

1. Very good progress has been made in raising standards across all NC subjects
2. Schemes of work exist for all NC subjects; the early years scheme of work has been adapted to reflect the requirements within the desirable outcomes curriculum; all schemes of work provide consistent guidance for staff.

3. The SDP has clear targets for improvement and criteria for success. However, it is not structured into the short, medium and long-term and does not draw together development issues that arise from subject and aspect co-ordinator assessments and the self-evaluation process;
4. Planning is relevant and all observed lessons have clear learning objectives.
5. An appropriate number of activities are undertaken in lessons.
6. Satisfactory progress has been made in restructuring the length of some sessions; the afternoon sessions remain imbalanced.
7. Improvements have been made to the provision of outdoor play used by the nursery pupils in the main school; the need remains to improve provision for the two-term part-time nursery pupils and reception pupils taught in the old school.

8.2 Key Issues for Action

The school needs to:

1. improve standards in writing across the curriculum;
2. plan for the delivery of key skills and PSE;
3. produce an SDP that is structured into short, medium and long-term goals and that draws together development issues that arise from subject and aspect co-ordinator assessments and the self-evaluation process;
4. review the quality and deployment of some support staff to maximise their impact upon learning, in order to raise standards;
5. review the arrangements for the two-term part-time nursery pupils that are taught in the old school to ensure that they have access to learning resources appropriate to their needs, and also ensure that the outdoor play resources available to reception and two-term part-time nursery pupils taught in the old school are appropriate to their needs;
6. include those aspects of the annual report of the GB that are needed to meet statutory requirements.

The inspectors would like to thank the head, staff, pupils, parents and governors of the school for their welcome and co-operation during the inspection.

APPENDIX

A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Birchgrove Infants School
School type	LEA maintained
Age -range of pupils	3-7
Address of school	Heol Nant Brân Birchgrove Swansea
Post-Code	SA7 9LS
Telephone Number	01792 813524

Headteacher	Miss Rebecca Anne Powell
Date of appointment	April 1979
Chair of Governors	Mr. John Howard
Registered Inspector	Mr. David Thorley
Dates of inspection	12.5.2003 – 14.5 2003

B. School Data and Indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>					
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Total
Number of pupils	31	46	49	58	184

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	9	1	9.5

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil : teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	19.1
Pupil : adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	10.7
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	25.5
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	19.1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>			
	R	KS1	Whole school
Term 1	92.1	92.2	92.2
Term 2	89.4	92.1	91.2
Term 3	87.1	92.4	91.0

Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection.	0
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C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS 1 Results: 2002			Number of pupils in Y2: 51						
Percentage of pupils at each level									
			D	A	W	1	2	3	4
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	4	14	55	27	0
EN: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	2	16	47	35	0
EN: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	9	12	78	2	0
EN: Speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	2	8	59	31	0
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	2	8	55	35	0
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	4	8	59	29	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school:	82%	In Wales:	81%

- D Pupils who have been disapplied under sections 364 and 365 of the Education Act 1996 or, in the case of the Task/Test were absent.
A Pupils who have failed to register a level due to absence
W Pupils who are working towards level 1, but have not yet achieved the standards needed for level 1.

D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

The school was inspected over a period of three days by a team of four inspectors. The registered inspector spent three days at the school, the team inspectors and lay inspector each spent two days.

- Each of the teachers was visited, every class was seen and all of the NC subjects inspected. 26 lessons were observed.
- Regular discussions were held with pupils to discover their knowledge of areas of the curriculum and their attitude towards learning.
- Pupils' work across a range of age and ability was inspected systematically and the school prepared an inclusive record of pupils' work and other activities for the inspectors.
- Discussions were also held with the head and staff to confirm their particular responsibilities and their professional perspectives.
- School documentation was inspected and summaries were prepared for team inspection meetings.
- The opinion of parents and governors was received and analysed. 23 parents returned questionnaires (99.1% of comments were positive).

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

NAME	ASPECTS	SUBJECTS
Mr D Thorley	1. The school and its priorities 2. Main findings 3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning 5.3 Curriculum 6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement 6.2 Leadership and efficiency 8.1 Progress since the last inspection 8.2 Key issues for action	Mathematics Science Design and technology Information technology Physical education
Mrs M Hanney	4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare 5.5 Provision for pupils with SEN	Early years Geography Music Religious education
Mrs S Barr	3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum 5.1 Teaching 5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting 6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	Welsh second language English History Art
Mr E Tipper	4.2 Behaviour and attitudes 4.3 Attendance 5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions 5.7 Partnership with industry	