

# **REPORT**

**on the**

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

**BLAEN Y MAES PRIMARY SCHOOL  
BROUGHTON AVENUE  
BLAEN Y MAES  
SWANSEA  
SA5 5LW**

School Number: 670/3095

Date of Inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2003

**By**

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Under Estyn contract number: T/174/02P

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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:

	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Years	3-4	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; and 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.

# CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. CONTEXT</b>	
The school and its priorities	1
<b>2. MAIN FINDINGS</b>	
The main findings of the report	2
<b>3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	
3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning	5
3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum	6
<b>4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	
4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	6
4.2 Behaviour and attitudes	7
4.3 Attendance	9
<b>5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION</b>	
5.1 Teaching	10
5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting	11
5.3 Curriculum	12
5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	13
5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	13
5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions	14
5.7 Partnership with industry	16
<b>6. MANAGEMENT</b>	
6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement	17
6.2 Leadership and efficiency	17
6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	18

## **7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING**

### **Standards achieved by pupils**

Provision for the under-fives	18
English	20
Mathematics	21
Science	22
Welsh second language	23
Design and technology	24
Information and communications technology	25
History	26
Geography	26
Art	27
Music	28
Physical education	29
Religious education	30

## **8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

8.1	Progress since the last inspection	31
8.2	Key issues for action	32

## **APPENDIX**

A.	Basic information about the school	33
B.	School data and indicators	33
C.	Results of National Curriculum assessments and public examinations	34
D.	The evidence base of the inspection	35
E.	Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	35

## 1. CONTEXT

### **The school and its priorities**

Blaen-y-Maes Primary School is situated in a large, mainly local authority maintained housing estate in a socially and economically deprived area to the north west of Swansea city centre. It is within the county of Swansea and serves the local area. The original school opened in 1960 as separate infant and junior schools which were amalgamated in 1982. It caters for 185 pupils (full-time equivalent or fte) including 36 part-time attenders in the Nursery. The school's numbers on roll are below its recommended capacity of 236 as the area has become increasingly depopulated in the last six years. The school also caters for a minority of pupils whose families have moved from other areas; some of whom attend for a limited period, and then move on.

- The school reports that 100 per cent of pupils come from homes which are economically disadvantaged. The proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is 70 per cent, which is very high when compared with the national average, but 10 per cent less than six years ago. The pupil population is mostly English-speaking and white. Few pupils receive extra support in learning English and none speak Welsh as their first language.

- There are 39 per cent of pupils on the register of special educational needs (SEN), which is about twice the national average. Two pupils have a formal statement of SEN. There are eight full-time teachers, including the headteacher, and five part-time teachers, five classroom support assistants, and one NNEB-trained assistant. The school has eight classes, including the nursery class.

- The school was last inspected in Spring 1997. Key issues from the previous inspection report were to:

1. give urgent attention to the safety issues identified during the inspection;
2. raise standards in Welsh in KS2, and address the shortcomings identified in other subjects;
3. amend the SDP to include precise and quantifiable targets in order to make it an effective document for school improvement;
4. further improve the quality of some schemes of work and teachers' termly and weekly planning;
5. develop systematic procedures for managing curriculum development and for monitoring and evaluating the standards achieved by pupils;
6. sustain and develop further the level of support for pupils with SEN; and
7. continue to develop home/school links with parents.

- The school's aims are reflected in its mission statement, namely, to foster academic and personal support in a caring, stable and supportive environment so that each individual can achieve his or her full potential.

## 2. MAIN FINDINGS

### The main findings of the report

Blaen-y-Maes Primary School is a good school which helps its pupils to attain good standards, often despite significant social and economic difficulties.

#### Standards of achievement

- Overall, standards of achievement were good in the 50 lessons observed. Standards were satisfactory or better in 92 per cent of the work scrutinised, being very good in two per cent of the work scrutinised, good in 64 per cent, satisfactory in 26 per cent, and unsatisfactory in eight per cent.

#### Standards of achievement for children aged under five

- The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and children are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Learning. Initial assessments show that the achievements of many children on joining the school are well below average. Children achieve good standards in five areas of learning and very good standards in one area of learning.

The six areas of learning for children under five	Standards of achievement	
	Nursery	Reception
Language, literacy and communication skills	Good	Good
Mathematical development	Good	Good
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Good	Good
Personal and social development	Very good	Very good
Creative development	Good	Good
Physical development	Good	Good

#### Standards of achievement for pupils by the age of 7 and 11

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
Welsh second language	Good	Good
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Satisfactory	Good
Science	Satisfactory	Good
Design and technology	Good	Good with very good features
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Good	Good
History	Satisfactory	Good
Geography	Good	Good
Art	Good	Good with very good features
Music	Good	Good with very good features
Physical education	Satisfactory	Good
Religious education	Satisfactory	Good

- In the 2002 National Curriculum (NC) assessments, in KS1, pupils' achievements were significantly below LEA and national results in all three core subjects. No pupils achieved the higher Level 3. However, the school's results compare favourably with those of schools in a similar context. Most pupils achieve well, relative to their abilities, and value their school studies. Boys achieved significantly less well than girls and continue to do so.
- In the 2002 NC assessments, in KS2, the school's results were below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieved less well in English than in mathematics or science. Boys achieved less well than girls. Pupils, generally, did very well in comparison with pupils from similar schools in Swansea and in Wales. The school's analysis of how well individual pupils have attained in KS2 when compared with their attainments in KS1 shows that in the last three years many have achieved well. The results in KS2 were almost twice as good as those in KS1 in 2002.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in KS1 and KS2 achieve very good standards, and make very good progress, relative to their ages and abilities.
- Standards in the key skills of speaking and listening are unsatisfactory, in reading, writing and numeracy are satisfactory, and in the use of ICT in a range of subjects are good.

### **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The overall quality of assemblies and acts of collective worship is very good. Pupils' responses to the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.

### **Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning**

- Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and their attitudes to learning are satisfactory. The school has a policy to promote racial equality, and has effective measures to prevent racism, bullying, sexism and other forms of discrimination. Attendance rates are unsatisfactory, averaging below 90% for the past three terms. Instances of unauthorised absence are minimal. The school's progress in meeting targets to improve pupils' attendance is satisfactory.

### **The quality of education provided**

- The overall quality of teaching is good, being satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons observed, good in 61 per cent, and very good in eight per cent. About 27 per cent of teaching was satisfactory. The school has improved the quality of teaching since the 1997 inspection, when 17 per cent was unsatisfactory and only 45 per cent was good.
- The overall quality of assessment is good, whereas the quality of recording and reporting to parents is satisfactory. The extent to which assessment is used to promote higher standards is good. The arrangements for assessing pupils' achievements are good and for recording these achievements are satisfactory. The extent to which the school analyses assessment data about English, mathematics and science in order to improve pupils' performance is good. The reports issued to parents are satisfactory.
- The quality of the curriculum for children aged under five, and for pupils in KS1 and KS2 is very good. The school's curriculum fully meets the requirements of the NC and for religious education. The quality of planning for the teaching of key skills is satisfactory. The arrangements for personal and social education are good. Planning for the Welsh Dimension is very good. Through the visits they make, and through subjects such as history and

geography, pupils gain a broad and informed understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales.

- The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Teachers run good extra-curricular clubs for pupils to improve their skills in English, mathematics, science, art, cookery, ICT, sport and musical performance and composition.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by a broad range of visits within the locality and further afield, including residential visits to the field studies centre at Port Eynon. Teachers organise many visits by specialists to the school. These experiences do much to enrich the curriculum, benefit pupils' learning and help raise standards.
- The quality of support and personal and educational guidance, including the procedures for promoting pupils' health and safety, are uniformly good. Pupils and staff voiced concerns which inspectors shared about the quality and quantity of some school lunches.
- The school ensures all pupils have equality of opportunity and full access to the NC, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or prior achievements. Very good provision is made for pupils with SEN.

#### **The partnership with parents and the community and the school's links with industry**

- The school sends information of good quality to parents, but, in general, parents make a satisfactory contribution to school life. Overall, links with the community help pupils' development and standards considerably, despite the negative effects of vandalism regularly caused by a small minority of disaffected members of the community. The school has drawn up a home/school agreement which it distributes to parents annually but only 55 per cent of parents return this. The overall quality of the school's partnership with industry is good.

#### **The management and efficiency of the school**

- The school's procedures for evaluating the quality of its provision are satisfactory as are the objectives for improvement it has set. Development planning and target-setting are also satisfactory.
- The overall quality of leadership is good and management systems are effective. The acting headteacher provides good leadership and a clear sense of direction to the school's affairs. With the senior management team, he has helped to hold the school community together in the difficult times of the last three years. Governors provide satisfactory leadership and undertake their duties conscientiously.
- The quality of subject leadership is good. Subject co-ordinators have monitored the quality of provision in some subjects, and schemes of work are being reviewed and updated in a planned cycle of improvement.
- Financial management is satisfactory. The school's routine administration and organisation are effective and efficient. The school complies with the statutory requirements and guidelines of the National Assembly for Wales.
- The quality of staffing is very good. A skilled, caring and conscientious team works well together and the morale of staff is good. Support staff, including external advisers, the secretary, the caretaker, classroom assistants and cleaners, make a good contribution to the quality of school life.

- The quality of internal accommodation is good and learning resources are good. However, the school's buildings and surrounds are constantly vandalised by a minority of members of the community. Although this is detrimental to the morale and well-being of the staff and pupils, they cope with considerable fortitude. It is unacceptable that the building is not secure from such attacks, of which there were three before, during and after this four-day inspection.

**The effectiveness with which the issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed**

Overall, the school has made good progress in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection and in enhancing and improving the quality of the education it offers.

### **3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning**

Overall, standards of achievement were good in the 50 lessons observed. Standards were satisfactory or better in 92 per cent of the work scrutinised, being very good in two per cent of the work scrutinised, good in 64 per cent, satisfactory in 26 per cent, and unsatisfactory in eight per cent.

- The overall quality of the educational provision for children aged under five is appropriate to their needs and they make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Learning. Initial assessments show that the achievements of most children on joining the school is well below average. Children aged under five achieve very good standards in their personal and social development. They achieve good standards in language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development.

- Standards of achievement in the work seen during the inspection were good with very good features in design and technology, art and music in KS2. Standards were good in all other subjects in KS2.

- Standards were good in Welsh (as a second language), English, design and technology, ICT, geography, art, and music in KS1. Standards in KS1 were satisfactory in mathematics, science, history, physical education and religious education.

- In the 2002 National Curriculum (NC) assessments, in KS1, pupils' achievements were below LEA and national results in all three core subjects. No pupils achieved the higher Level 3. However, the school's results compare favourably with those of schools in a similar context. Most pupils achieve well, relative to their abilities, and value their school studies. Boys achieved significantly less well than girls and continue to do so.

- In the 2002 NC assessments, in KS2, the school's results were below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieved less well in English than in mathematics or science. Boys achieved less well than girls. Pupils, generally, did very well in comparison with pupils from similar schools in Swansea and in Wales. The school's analysis of how well individual pupils have attained in KS2 when compared with their attainments in KS1 shows that in the last three years many have achieved well. The school's results in KS2 were almost twice as good as those in KS1 in 2002.

- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in KS1 and KS2 achieve very good standards, and make very good progress, relative to their ages and abilities. Pupils who are gifted or more able also make good progress and fulfil their potential because of a series of opportunities teachers create in the enhanced curriculum on offer.

### **3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum**

Standards achieved by pupils in applying key skills across the curriculum are good in information and communication technology, satisfactory in reading, writing and numeracy but unsatisfactory in speaking and listening.

- Children aged under five have good opportunities to develop their skills of language, literacy, numeracy and use of ICT. They make good progress in applying their skills in all six areas of learning.

- A significant number of pupils often do not listen carefully to their teachers or to each other during discussion times. They lack concentration, are inattentive and do not follow instructions correctly.

- Many pupils have difficulty expressing their thoughts orally. Teachers work hard through questioning, role-play opportunities and by using the correct terminology to develop pupils' vocabulary.

- Reading and writing skills are used to a satisfactory standard in subjects other than English. Opportunities for individual and group research using books, CD-ROMs or the Internet are sometimes missed. In several instances, writing is restricted to very short responses, for example, by inserting words in worksheets.

- Pupils' numeracy skills are used satisfactorily in science (with graphs and tables), geography (with co-ordinates) and design technology (in measuring). Opportunities are, however, missed.

- Pupils make good progress in using ICT to extend their learning across the curriculum. It is well used in art and in supporting the Welsh language. Appropriate programs are often used to reinforce numeracy and literacy skills. Pupils are confident when word-processing and often improve the layout and presentation of their written work. Data handling skills are used well in mathematics.

## **4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

- The acting headteacher, staff and governors are successful in creating a caring, supportive environment where pupils feel secure and respected.

- Very good provision is made for pupils' spiritual development. The daily act of collective worship makes a significant contribution to this provision; assemblies are well-planned and meaningful occasions where pupils are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and consider the values and beliefs of others. The quality of pupils' singing is outstanding and this contributes significantly to the air of reverence that is established and maintained throughout assemblies.
- The aims of the school encourage and promote positive values and attitudes. The quality of relationships throughout the school is very good. Staff work diligently to establish a climate where teachers and pupils exhibit mutual respect and where values such as honesty, fair play and kindness are being fostered. Staff work hard to ensure pupils have a clear understanding of right from wrong.
- Pupils understand the need to help others less fortunate than themselves and regular support is given to a number of local and national charities.
- The provision for pupils' social development is very good. They readily volunteer for and accept responsibility. For example, pupils are encouraged to become actively involved in decision-making within the school; the school council is a very good forum where pupils' concerns, ideas and opinions are sought.
- The school provides a rich programme of extra-curricular activities and educational visits, including residential visits, which contribute well to pupil's social development, confidence and self-esteem. Pupils have had the opportunity to take part in many exciting performances of music and drama, which have received considerable critical acclaim. Staff, pupils, parents and governors are justly proud of the school's achievement in winning the Lord Mayor's Trophy at the Abertawe Music Festival.
- The school has a strong Welsh ethos. *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is carefully planned into many subject areas and visits to places of interest such as Margam Park and to Borfa House help pupils develop a good understanding of the heritage and culture of Wales. The school's annual Eisteddfod is highly successful in encouraging pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and is greatly enjoyed by the whole school community.
- Pupils are developing an understanding, and respect for, other faiths and cultures. Cultural diversity is celebrated throughout the school and pupils learn about the different social and cultural traditions in India and within the Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths.
- Racial equality is promoted successfully through the overall supportive and caring nature of the school, through aspects of the personal and social education (PSE) programme and through the school's effective equal opportunities and racial equality policies.
- Pupils respond well to the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **4.2 Behaviour and attitudes**

Overall, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are satisfactory.

- The acting headteacher, teaching and support staff recognise the importance of good behaviour as a foundation for pupils' learning and all work diligently to promote good behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning.
- The school has a clear policy and set of procedures to promote good behaviour and all staff have undertaken comprehensive training in behaviour management. The school works closely with a number of agencies, including the LEA and Barnardo's charity, to identify pupils with behavioural and emotional problems and to involve and support those pupils and their families.
- A clear code of conduct exists and most pupils understand what is expected of them. Pupils have been involved in the formulation of their classroom rules, which encourage mutual respect and responsibility and reflect the supportive ethos of the school. The majority of pupils are polite, courteous and relate well to staff, to each other and to visitors.
- The acting headteacher has established effective procedures to deal with pupils whose behaviour is giving cause for concern and who might be at risk of exclusion. Pupils are counselled, parents are involved and support is sought from external agencies and the behaviour support unit of the LEA when necessary.
- Many pupils have positive attitudes to their work and play. They co-operate with staff and their fellow pupils, settle quickly to tasks and sustain concentration. Many pupils enjoy their work and are keen to do their best. However, in most year groups there are pupils who find it difficult to listen and concentrate for any length of time. They become restless, lose interest and sometimes disturb the learning of other pupils. This is especially evident in the afternoon sessions. Teachers work diligently with these pupils to promote understanding and acceptance of school rules and conventions but the flow and pace of lessons are often impeded.
- Pupils' behaviour during assemblies and during the lunch breaks is good. The school has recently introduced a very successful 'playground helpers' initiative during lunch times. Y6 pupils act as helpers and be-frienders to other children in the playground. They undertake their duties conscientiously and act responsibly. They take good initiatives, are pro-active in the help they offer to others and they make a positive contribution to the good order that exists in the playground. The provision of an exciting and stimulating range of playground equipment and apparatus has contributed to the improvement of behaviour during the lunch breaks.
- Teachers celebrate good, and improving behaviour, in the classroom and in whole-school assemblies. The weekly assembly to celebrate the school's 'superstars' is greatly enjoyed by pupils and appreciated by many parents.
- The school actively promotes the values of tolerance, kindness and fairness. The acting headteacher and staff take the issues of bullying and all other forms of discrimination very seriously and effective procedures are in place to deal with the very few incidents brought to the attention of staff. No incidents of bullying, sexism or racism were observed during the inspection.
- Five pupils have been excluded on a temporary basis during the past twelve months. These exclusions were carefully considered by the acting headteacher and appropriate procedures were followed.

- The behaviour and inattention of some pupils has an adverse impact on the standards they achieve. However, the positive behaviour and attitudes of many pupils contribute not only to the efficient functioning of the school, but also to the standards pupils achieve and to their personal development.

### **4.3 Attendance**

Despite considerable efforts by the school, attendance rates are unsatisfactory.

- Attendance rates for the past three terms average only 87%, a figure well below the national average for primary schools.
- No year group consistently achieves satisfactory rates of attendance in excess of 90%, and attendance in the nursery is considerably lower than for the rest of the school, averaging only 72% for the past three terms.
- Registration sessions and lessons start promptly. A minority of pupils are late for the start of the school day.
- A significant number of pupils in all year groups have a high level of persistent absence which is having an adverse impact on the continuity of their education and on the standards they achieve. Many other pupils have their progress impeded because of sporadic absence throughout the school year.
- Unauthorised absence accounts for less than three per cent of all absence and the school acknowledges that parental condoning of absence is widespread throughout all year groups.
- Registration is conducted efficiently and in accordance with statutory requirements. Attendance registers are correctly marked and maintained and teachers are rigorous in recording and reporting pupil absence.
- The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor attendance and punctuality carefully. Procedures are in place to encourage good attendance and punctuality, to ensure absence is adequately explained and to follow up situations when necessary.
- The school has introduced a number of imaginative initiatives to celebrate and reward good and improving attendance throughout the school, and these initiatives are having a positive impact on the attendance of some pupils.
- The school's partnership with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is very productive. Regular meetings contribute to the successful monitoring of attendance and to the development of further strategies to improve attendance rates. Individual pupils with attendance problems are identified, contact is made with parents at an early stage, and other welfare agencies are involved when necessary. Annually, a small number of parents are prosecuted for failing to ensure their children attend school on a regular basis.
- The school has set no formal targets for the improvement of rates of attendance but the high priority afforded to attendance and punctuality is frequently made known to pupils and parents.

- The school complies fully with attendance requirements set out in the National Assembly for Wales Circular 3/99, *Pupil Support and Social Inclusion*.

## **5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Teaching**

The overall quality of teaching is good, being satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons observed, good in 61 per cent, and very good in eight per cent. About 27 per cent of teaching was satisfactory. The school has improved the quality of teaching since the 1997 inspection, when 17 per cent was unsatisfactory and only 45 per cent was good.

#### **Good features**

- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. They have devised useful strategies for specialist teaching of colleagues' classes in subjects such as Welsh, music and geography which helps ensure that lessons are interesting and informative.
- Teachers plan effectively for the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in all areas of the curriculum. They are steadily re-shaping schemes of work to better answer the needs of Blaen-y-Maes's pupils.
- Teachers have high expectations, making clear what they expect of pupils in terms of achievement and behaviour. They use praise to motivate well and help reinforce pupils' self-esteem. Teachers focus on what pupils can do and create a positive climate for learning. In particularly effective lessons, such as those for children aged under five, or in history and geography, teachers manage good resources very effectively and work in good partnerships of learning with pupils. Their marking is generally helpful in highlighting what pupils need to do to improve.
- Teachers use a good range of organisational strategies. They provide pupils with opportunities to work as a whole class, in groups, pairs and as individuals. They also use a good mix of teaching techniques to enliven their lessons.
- Teachers know their pupils very well, value them as individuals and establish good relationships with them. They display a caring attitude towards them and offer a firm, fair and consistent approach to discipline. As a result, pupils confirm that they feel happy and secure, and they do well.
- Teachers match work satisfactorily to pupils' abilities. Lessons are planned to take account of the needs and capabilities of pupils of different ages. Teachers make good provision for pupils with SEN, as well as for pupils who are gifted or able.
- In the best lessons, teachers encourage pupils to develop an enquiring attitude to learning by asking, as well as answering, perceptive questions. Teachers' proficient use of an interactive whiteboard is having a significant impact upon pupils' learning.
- Teachers use the Internet, when the system allows access, to enrich pupils' knowledge about subjects such as local geographical and historical studies of the Swansea area.

## **Shortcomings**

- Teachers sometimes use insufficiently challenging worksheets and there are not enough investigative tasks in some classes in subjects such as mathematics and science.
- When teaching is only satisfactory, it is either because lessons are not challenging enough and pupils find the work too easy, or planning does not focus sharply enough on the skills to be learned.

## **5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting**

The quality of assessment is good whereas the quality of recording and reporting is satisfactory.

- The school's policy for assessment, recording and reporting establishes clear guidance for teachers. There are manageable systems for the regular assessment and recording of pupils' progress.
- Baseline assessments are administered on entry to the Early Years department. These assessments provide early and useful information on individual children, which teachers use to plan relevant experiences and to identify pupils with SEN.
- Opportunities for assessing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in the core and foundation subjects are identified in teachers' planning.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and make informal assessment of their achievements on a day to day basis. They record individual pupil's achievements in their Assessment Diaries on a regular basis. However, the format of the diaries does not allow for many comments in the foundation subjects.
- With the emphasis on the core subjects, teachers maintain detailed records of pupils' achievements to monitor their progress across the school. Results of tests in numeracy and literacy, national tests and other regular assessments are closely analysed for trends and weaknesses. This data is well used for tracking pupils' progress across the school. However, the school does not have a consistent procedure for setting meaningful targets for individual pupils, except for those with special educational needs.
- Generally, the marking of pupils' work is positive and encouraging but seldom provides written indicators for improvement. Oral feedback given to pupils is generally effective and supportive.
- Although portfolios of levelled work in the core subjects, to aid teachers' assessment skills, have not yet been established, examples of annotated pupils' work in the core subjects are maintained in individual portfolios and are effective in monitoring standards.
- Arrangements for the assessment of pupils with SEN are very good. Detailed records are kept and regularly reviewed.
- Annual reports to parents provide useful information about pupils' progress. However, they do not always clearly identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses in all subjects, nor provide well-defined targets for further improvement.

### 5.3 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum provided for children aged under five, and for pupils in KS1 and KS2 is very good. The requirements of the NC and for religious education are fully met. Teachers ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity to learn.

- The curriculum for Nursery and Reception children is good and teachers successfully promote the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. The transition to work on the NC is managed smoothly and effectively due to the detailed match of work to the needs of individual pupils.
- Most lessons are planned satisfactorily with work which helps pupils develop the skills they need in later life. Teachers have introduced new policies for all subjects, including for personal and social education, and have set about refining schemes of work to better match pupils' needs.
- Planning for the development of key skills across the curriculum is satisfactory.
- The arrangements for pupils' personal and social development, including health and sex education, are good. Pupils are given, for example, wise guidance on the evils of drug abuse.
- The school uses ESTYN guidance to manage the amount of time spent on teaching the curriculum each week and ensures that pupils get a balanced amount of time on each subject.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils, including those for sports such as football and rounders, as well as for the choir, mathematics and cookery clubs, recorder and guitar tuition. Other activities include trips and visits to places of educational interest, such as the Museum of Welsh Life at St. Fagan's, Borfa House field studies centre at Port Eynon, and the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Manor of Llancaiach Fawr. These visits not only enhance and extend pupils' learning, but also reinforce Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig. The Welsh Dimension is promoted well in subjects such as history and geography.
- The school has instituted a home/school agreement which is distributed annually to parents, about 55 per cent of which are returned.
- Teachers promote racial equality well and this is ensured through a policy to promote racial harmony.
- Teachers make inconsistent use of homework to extend learning opportunities. Some classes get regular homework to reinforce learning but others are set little.
- In some lessons, the objectives for learning amount to a list of tasks to be completed rather than skills or knowledge to be acquired.

## **5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

The quality of support and guidance and the attention paid to pupils' welfare throughout the school are good.

- The acting headteacher and staff attach particular importance to the pastoral care of pupils. A happy atmosphere prevails in the school and pupils work and play in a caring, supportive environment where they feel secure and valued.
- Pupils are confident in seeking the help and support of staff. They readily turn to adults for help and are listened to and treated with respect. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is very good and this contributes significantly to pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
- The acting headteacher, teaching and support staff know pupils very well and give careful consideration to their educational, personal and social needs. The efforts of staff are sometimes hampered by the irregular attendance of some pupils.
- Pupils are encouraged to become actively involved in decision making within the school. The School Council is a very good forum where pupils' concerns, ideas and opinions are sought. The acting headteacher and staff listen carefully to pupils' recommendations and often act upon them. Pupils are given a sense of ownership of their school and they respond maturely to their responsibilities on the Council.
- The school has a detailed policy and set of procedures to promote health and safety, which are monitored by staff and the governing body. Continuous acts of vandalism are a cause of considerable concern to the school and often disrupt pupils' learning and impact adversely upon their welfare. For example, during the inspection, the boundary fencing surrounding the nursery outdoor play area had been removed by thieves, limiting outdoor activities for the youngest children.
- Aspects of hygiene, health, personal and emotional well being are incorporated into an effective personal and social education (PSE) programme and staff are skilled at delivering these topics with tact and sensitivity.
- Pupils and staff voiced concerns, which inspectors shared, about the quality and quantity of some school lunches. Lunches served to pupils during the inspection allowed no choice and portions were inadequate for older pupils.
- The school has produced a new Child Protection Policy, which is awaiting formal adoption by the governing body. Procedures for dealing with child protection issues are in place and teachers have undertaken training in this aspect. Good working relationships have been established with social services and with other external welfare agencies.
- The school's policy for equal opportunities is successful and the high priority given to the social inclusion of all pupils is exemplary.

## **5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)**

- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in KS1 and KS2 achieve very good standards, and make very good progress, relative to their ages and abilities. The provision for pupils

with SEN is very good. Arrangements are thorough and caring, and teachers deal well with the more able pupils as well as the less able. There are 39 per cent of pupils with SEN on the register of SEN – twice the national average - and two pupils hold formal statements of SEN.

- Procedures reflect the requirements of the new SEN Code of Practice and are implemented systematically.
- The SEN teacher, support teachers and assistants provide very good support for pupils who have special educational needs, through withdrawal sessions and in-class support. Work in the withdrawal sessions is well-planned and appropriate to pupils' needs.
- The SEN teacher provides a clear and very positive lead to the school. She is very efficient and her co-ordination arrangements for SEN throughout the school are very effective.
- Records are well organised, detailed and kept fully up to date. They are useful working documents, the details of which are used successfully to track individual pupil's progress and to provide appropriate support.
- Individual educational plans (IEPs), drawn up by the SEN teacher and class teacher, contain specific targets and provide detailed guidance. These are regularly reviewed and new targets set.
- In the classrooms, teachers provide differentiated work and tasks, which are matched well to pupils' ability.
- Suitable strategies have been drawn up for helping pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Classroom assistants and various external agencies are used effectively and make a substantial contribution to pupils' learning and welfare.
- Pupils make good progress and gain much in self-esteem with regular praise and encouragement. The school makes concerted efforts with these pupils, with staff often giving up their own time, and celebrate their achievements. Parents are kept well informed at all stages.

## **5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions**

The school places particular importance on its partnership with parents, other schools and the local community and works diligently to ensure good relationships exist in all these areas.

- Many parents are supportive of the school. They value the school's welcoming nature and appreciate the ready access they have to the acting headteacher and staff. A useful home/school partnership agreement has been drawn up and sent to parents but only 55 per cent of parents return this.
- Partnership with parents is developed at an early stage. Early Years staff are successful in providing parents with information and opportunities to become involved in their children's education. The involvement of the nursery department in the *Tandem Project*, where parents are encouraged to support children in the classroom on a regular basis, is proving to be successful.

- Communication with parents is well established and effective. Parents are kept well informed by the annual report of the governing body and by the school prospectus, which is currently being updated to ensure all statutory requirements are included. The quality of additional information provided in regular newsletters and in 'Blaen y Maes News' is outstanding, and provides parents with extensive information about the life and work of the school as well as successfully celebrating pupils' achievements.
- Parents have the opportunity to meet with teachers each term to discuss their children's work and progress. Despite efforts made by the school, attendance at these meetings is sometimes disappointing.
- The school's small but active Parents' Association makes a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school. The Association organises social and fund-raising events, which enhance links with the local community and provide the school with a valuable source of additional income. The Association is a good forum where parents can raise issues about school matters. The acting headteacher and staff value the input of parents and recognise the benefits to the school of this positive partnership.
- A small number of parents, grandparents and friends give freely of their time helping out throughout the school and accompanying pupils on educational visits. Their commitment is greatly valued by staff and they make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Parental involvement in the family learning project has been very successful and benefited both pupils and parents.
- The school enjoys successful pastoral and administrative links with the main secondary schools to which pupils transfer. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils are good and ensure that Y6 pupils look forward to secondary school with confidence. The school recognises the need to improve curriculum links and is working diligently to achieve this through regular liaison meetings with the secondary schools and other primary schools in its 'cluster' group.
- The school has established successful partnerships with several institutes of higher education and provides training facilities for student teachers and students undertaking nursery nurse qualifications. Students from local secondary schools regularly undertake work-experience placements at the school. All students are well supported by staff and they make a positive contribution to the life of the school.
- The school works very hard within the local community to develop positive partnerships that benefit pupils. Productive links with local churches, chapels, and religious communities and with the Blaen y Maes Community Centre are particularly beneficial. Good use is made of the community as a learning resource. Educational visits and the expertise of members of the local community make a positive contribution to pupils' motivation, learning and standards of achievement.
- The school's involvement in the *Blaen y Maes After School Network* is highly successful. The acting headteacher, school staff and network personnel work tirelessly to provide pupils with a range of exciting after-school activities which are greatly appreciated by both pupils and parents.
- Overall, the links that the school enjoys with parents and community, schools and other institutions have a positive impact on pupils' motivation, standards of achievement and personal development.

## 5.7 Partnership with industry

The school's partnership with industry is good.

- Partnership with industry is well established throughout the school and the valuable links with industry, business and commerce enrich work in many curriculum areas.
- The school has no formal policy for industry links but clear procedures are in place to raise the economic and industrial understanding of pupils and to give them insight into the world of work. The acting headteacher and staff recognise the contribution that industry links make to the curriculum and pupils benefit from a number of rich and stimulating experiences. However, no teachers have undertaken a relevant industrial placement with a view to enhancing professional development and enriching curriculum provision for pupils.
- Through their visits to a number of industrial, retail and commercial sites within their locality and further afield, including supermarkets, local shops, a fast-food restaurant, an R.S.P.C.A. rescue centre, a clearing bank call-centre and a fire station, pupils are gaining first-hand knowledge of different working environments and an understanding of the variety of work undertaken in the area.
- Teachers actively encourage personnel from a wide variety of professions and occupations to speak to pupils about their work. The contribution of personnel from the emergency services, together with health professionals, has had a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils have also benefited from the many productive links with professional artists, authors and musicians.
- Pupils have been involved in a major local environmental project and are keenly aware of environmental issues which impact upon their school and local community. They are knowledgeable about pollution, vandalism and the effects of litter and want to improve their local environment. Pupils and staff are justly proud of the school's contribution to the environmental exhibition at County Hall.
- Working closely with professional artists, musicians, writers and actors, pupils have been involved in a number of exciting activities. For example, older pupils have taken part in a workshop with performers from the Welsh National Opera. Pupils have performed Noye's Fludde by Benjamin Britten. They have worked with a local artist to produce three large murals, and the school's Samba Band has recorded a CD. These opportunities have not only contributed considerably to pupils' self-esteem and confidence but have also broadened pupils' understanding of the world of work and the different professions that are available.
- Older pupils' understanding of the work of the emergency services has been enhanced by the school's involvement in the 'Crucial Crew' programme.
- The acting headteacher and staff are committed to the continuing development of a positive partnership with industry. The links already established contribute significantly to pupils' motivation, learning and standards of achievement.

## **6. MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement**

Overall, the school's approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement is satisfactory.

- Teachers are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are keen to improve their skills and methods of working in order to raise standards of pupils' achievements.
- Good progress has been made since the last inspection in developing the role of the co-ordinators in the evaluation process. They scrutinise pupils' books and teachers' planning documents, and analyse assessment data across the school. At present, there is no monitoring of classroom practice and there are no portfolios of exemplars of good practice in different subjects.
- The governing body and curriculum leaders do not yet play a sufficiently active role in evaluating standards and drawing up plans for improvement. The present self-evaluation document lacks focus and detail in terms of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- An analysis is made of National Curriculum tests results and other assessment data and the information is used carefully to identify areas for improvement and to compare progress with that of schools in similar contexts.
- The acting headteacher has identified whole-school priorities and targets in the SDP up to the present time. Future targets are to be identified and acted upon following publication of the inspection report.

### **6.2 Leadership and efficiency**

The overall quality of leadership and management is good.

- The school's ethos for learning and sense of purpose are good. Overall, teachers have good expectations of pupils' standards. The school's aims, values, and policies are appropriate for its pupils.
- The acting headteacher provides good leadership and a clear sense of direction to the school's affairs. With the senior management team, he has helped to hold the school community together in the difficult times of the last three years.
- The quality of subject leadership is good. Co-ordinators regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of provision in English, mathematics and other subjects. They guide subject development through their planning in all subjects.
- Governors undertake their duties conscientiously, and give the school good support. They meet regularly with the acting headteacher and staff and are keen to help with new developments. Their involvement in monitoring and evaluating the development of subjects is satisfactory. Governors exercise an appropriate oversight of the steps taken to ensure the school gets the best value for the money it spends.

- Financial management is satisfactory and the school receives close support from the local education authority in balancing its books. Parents and other members of the community give the school extra financial support through fund-raising. The school's routine administration and organisation are effective and efficient, and it complies with the statutory requirements and guidelines of the National Assembly for Wales.

### **6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

The quality and quantity of staffing is very good. The adequacy of the learning resources and of the internal accommodation is good.

- The teachers and classroom support assistants are appropriately qualified and are deployed well to meet the needs of the pupils and to deliver the NC. They make good use of training opportunities, often in-house, to improve their knowledge and skills in many areas of the curriculum. They work hard as a team and are committed to raising standards. All have appropriate job descriptions.
- The school does not have a policy in place for the induction of new teachers.
- Resources are generally sufficient, of good quality and are utilised effectively.
- The accommodation is spacious and boasts two halls, two libraries, a computer suite and a number of classrooms for support groups. Well-planned, colourful displays celebrate pupils' achievements, support learning and brighten and enhance the learning environment.
- The building is, however, constantly vandalised by a minority of members of the community. Although this is detrimental to the morale and well-being of the staff and pupils, they cope with considerable fortitude. It is unacceptable that the building is not secure from such attacks, of which there were three before, during and after this four-day inspection.

## **7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING**

### **Standards achieved by pupils**

#### **Provision for the under-fives**

The overall quality of the educational provision for children under five is very good and successfully promotes the achievement of the Desirable Outcomes for children's learning. Nursery children (3-4 year olds) and Reception children (4-5 year olds) achieve good standards in five of the six areas of learning, and very good standards in their personal and social development.

#### **Nursery**

Standards of achievement for three to four year olds are good generally and very good in personal and social skills.

#### **Good features**

- Children make very good progress in their personal and social skills. Provision is well focused on developing these important skills. A wealth of activities is available for children to interact with each other and adults. They are beginning to show confidence and self-respect. Children know the established routines and are very happy and secure in their environment. The majority share and take turns and they tidy up and clear away after activities.
- Considering the low starting points of many children in speech and vocabulary on entry, they make good progress in language and literacy. Most listen carefully and are interested in stories. During ‘milk and fruit time,’ children are encouraged to talk about a range of topics to develop their vocabulary. They readily undertake role-play in the ‘Bears’ House.’ Children choose to play in the writing corner and make marks on paper, for example, writing a letter to the Easter Rabbit, and they understand that marks, print and pictures carry meaning. They look at books and some are happy to talk about the pictures.
- Children’s mathematical skills are developing well. Through ‘water and sand play’ children are learning terms such as: ‘more than,’ ‘less than,’ bigger and smaller. They set places for the three bears’ tea, counting out the cups etc. They recognise and match the biggest, medium sized and small clothes for the bears and ‘measure’ the teddies. They handle money in a role-play situation, know number rhymes and count to five.
- Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are good. Children confidently use a simple computer program to match and sort items. They observe and feel different materials. They are aware of other places in Wales and know that some things are older than others. Children experience some form of cooking every week.
- Children are making good progress in their physical skills. They develop co-ordination and control when playing with construction toys, making jigsaws and using playdo. Their gross motor skills are well developed with regular use of large outdoor play equipment.
- Children’s creative skills are good. They learn to use colour and paint to express their ideas, make items, such as Easter cards and baskets, by cutting and sticking and create music with their ‘kitchen orchestra.’

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Reception**

Standards of achievement are good in all areas and very good in personal and social development.

### **Good features**

- Children make good progress in language and literacy. Most children listen attentively to the teacher and to each other when talking about their own experiences or in role-play situations. They identify letters from flash cards and many read and write simple words. Some recognise rhyming words and suggest other words to rhyme. Very good progress is made in Welsh, with children asking and answering a range of simple questions with confidence and enjoyment.
- Children’s mathematical skills are good. Children recognise patterns and match and sequence objects correctly. They count to 10 and back confidently in both English and Welsh.

They recognise and correctly name a range of 2D shapes and measure with non-standard units.

- Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good. They know about the work of people in the community and the importance of family and friends. They observe changes in growing plants and animals and keep a diary of the life cycle of a butterfly. They are very familiar with the computer and use it regularly and confidently in all areas of learning. A visit to the Swansea Museum helped their understanding of old and new and long ago.
- Progress in personal and social skills is very good. Their behaviour is very good. They concentrate well on the tasks they are given and respond enthusiastically. Children work well together and learn to take turns.
- Children's physical development is good. They have good body control, moving confidently with increasing co-ordination. Their awareness and use of space is developing well and they sustain energetic activities with enjoyment. Fine motor skills are well developed with regular opportunities for cutting, joining and drawing.
- Children make good progress in creative development. They achieve well in singing and making music. Children use a variety of media to draw and paint and to create patterns. Regular visits by musicians and artists help to develop children's interest and their creative skills.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### **English**

Overall standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2. Many pupils make good achievements relative to their abilities.

### **Good features**

- Standards in speaking and listening in KS1 are unsatisfactory and a minority of pupils do not listen carefully to teachers. Most speak confidently to adults but do not have a wide vocabulary, and a significant minority has difficulty in expressing their thoughts clearly.
- In KS1, pupils read with increasing accuracy, fluency and independence. Their knowledge of phonics is satisfactorily developed and they apply this knowledge in both their reading and writing. Most of them read aloud with confidence, and more able pupils read with expression, recognising the role of punctuation to make sense of the text.
- They understand some of the features of different categories of literature such as traditional tales and of literary conventions such as inverted commas. They express preferences regarding the types of books they like to read and enjoy choosing books to take home.
- Pupils in KS1 make satisfactory progress in handwriting, spelling and punctuation. The standard of handwriting of a minority of pupils is good and most develop a legible, consistent style.

- In KS1, pupils write in a satisfactory range of forms including personal accounts, letters and stories. When they write stories, most pupils in Y2 develop their ideas in sequences of sentences and use capital letters and full stops appropriately. Y1 pupils produced some effective pieces of writing that were interesting and well organised.
- Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in speaking and listening in KS2, but a minority has some weaknesses. In lower KS2, a minority listens inattentively when the teacher reads aloud to them, although they are eager to answer questions and some of them offer perceptive responses. In reading from a big book, most speak satisfactorily.
- Standards of reading in KS2 are good and pupils use a range of reading strategies for different purposes. For example, they can read closely and give examples to support answers to questions. In Y5 and Y6, more able pupils can infer meanings from the text. Less able pupils have developed confidence in reading to the whole class and have good literal comprehension skills.
- By upper KS2, most pupils know how to use a library classification system efficiently to find a book on a particular topic, and use the contents and index pages. Pupils have become more enthused about reading because of the creation of a library with a footballing theme. This interesting initiative came from an idea by Y3 pupils but has been taken up by other year groups as well.
- Pupils in KS2 make good progress in the development of handwriting, spelling and the use of punctuation. They take responsibility for practising and learning to spell words correctly. They use a range of punctuation effectively. The handwriting of the majority is regular and fluent whilst their presentation is satisfactory.
- In KS2, pupils write satisfactorily in a range of forms and learn gradually how to plan, draft and develop their ideas. For example, in their poetry writing, most pupils in lower KS2 follow closely the ideas in the original stories they have studied. By upper KS2, some write stories with some interesting and original ideas.
- Pupils have improved their ICT capability in their wordprocessed writing, for example, by using a range of fonts and styles of text in poetry and letters.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils in KS2 do not write for a sufficiently wide range of purposes and audiences.
- Boys' standards are much lower than girls', particularly in writing.

### **Mathematics**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

#### **Good features**

- In KS1, pupils are becoming familiar with numerals and number symbols. They read, write and order numbers correctly, and are beginning to recognise number sequences and identify numerical patterns. They have a good recall of number bonds to 10.

- They are confident with simple addition and subtraction, demonstrating a good understanding of place value. They are developing mental strategies from an early age and older pupils show an understanding of simple multiplication and division.
- Pupils recognise the value of coins and are able to 'buy' items and calculate the change due from 10 or 20 pence.
- They confidently name 2D and 3D shapes, use simple non-standard and standard units of measure, recognise simple fractions and are starting to tell the time.
- In KS2, pupils continue to reinforce their work in numeracy with an increasing understanding of patterns and relations. They further develop different mental strategies and are confident in explaining their workings using the correct mathematical terms.
- Older pupils have a firm command of place value, including decimal places, a good recall of multiplication facts and have a mastery of complex calculations using the four rules of number. They understand the relationship between percentages, fractions and decimals, and deal with negative numbers correctly.
- Their ability to name and describe 2D and 3D shapes is good. They effectively solve problems in shape, measurement and time, including the use of a 24- hour clock.
- They correctly measure the perimeter and area of different regular shapes and confidently fix or find a point using co-ordinates.
- Pupils collate data, often based on class questioning or on investigations in other subjects, and create a range of graphs and tables, which they analyse with confidence.

### **Shortcomings**

- Older pupils in KS1 have difficulty in explaining their thinking.

### **Science**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

### **Good features**

- In KS1, pupils learn to observe and examine objects and materials carefully and can identify similarities and differences. They recognise the difference between living and non-living things.
- They show a sound understanding of the process of germination by growing plants in their classrooms. They know that plants need light and water for healthy growth and they recognise and name the major parts of a flower. They correctly sequence the life cycle of a butterfly and of a growing plant.
- Their understanding of forces, including that of the wind and of gravity, is developing well.

- Pupils recognise different materials and describe their properties and why they are used for different purposes, in a house for example.
- Pupils are aware of loud and soft sounds and successfully identify their sources.
- In KS2, pupils appreciate the importance of fair testing when evaluating the evidence gained. They predict, measure and record their findings.
- Pupils have a basic understanding of the functions of the major parts of the human body. They understand the need for a varied diet and the effect of exercise on the body.
- They have a good understanding of life cycles and food chains and know that different creatures need different habitats for survival.
- Their study of forces, magnetism and electricity is well developed. They can make and break electrical circuits and understand the difference between conductors and insulators.
- Older pupils explain the connection between the sun, the earth and the moon and the way the position of the sun affects shadows and creates night and day.
- Older pupils explain the Water Cycle and how evaporation and condensation occurs.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' scientific knowledge and skills are underdeveloped.

### **Welsh second language**

Standards of achievement are good in both key stages because of the commitment of teachers and the enthusiasm of pupils. The regular use of incidental Welsh, classroom displays, and the high profile of the Welsh language and culture across the school make a positive contribution to the development of the subject.

### **Good features**

- Pupils in both key stages show positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards the language. Their pronunciation when speaking or reading aloud is generally good.
- In KS1, pupils sing songs and action rhymes to reinforce vocabulary. They show familiarity with simple greetings and instructions, and answer simple questions.
- They know the primary colours and can ask for different food items, developing a simple dialogue with a partner, including their likes or dislikes of each item.
- In KS2, pupils further develop their knowledge and understanding of the language through repeating and extending set phrases about themselves and the weather. They enjoy stories in Welsh, read clearly when asked and make sensible suggestions when translating.
- They count confidently up to 20 and beyond, and older pupils can tell the time accurately using simple scripts to reinforce and practise with each other. Pupils can give simple personal details about themselves, such as the type of house they live in or the sport they like.

- Workbooks show that written tasks are generally completed with confidence and accuracy.
- They enjoy learning and singing Welsh songs.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' use of Welsh in other areas of the curriculum is limited.

### **Design and technology**

Standards of achievement are good in both key stages with very good features in Y1 and Y6.

#### **Good features**

- Across both key stages, pupils discuss different designs when drawing pictures of models, and identify the equipment and materials needed. They discuss their finished products and consider possible improvements.
- In KS1, pupils select, cut, stick and assemble collage pictures with a variety of materials, showing good levels of skill and independence.
- They use construction kits to good effect to develop their imagination and dexterity.
- Y1 pupils have designed and made a variety of items for a purpose, including a 'Big Bad Pig Catcher', pop-up books and musical instruments. The finished items show good understanding, imagination and choice of appropriate materials and tools.
- Y2 pupils have linked their work to a science topic on Forces and created wind chimes. Their Welsh tiles, made with the help of a local artist, demonstrate good design, control and concentration.
- In KS2, pupils further develop their evaluating skills. Their understanding of designing and making for a purpose or a need is developing well, as seen in their photograph frames, puppets, Indian bags and Harvest bread.
- Pupils' understanding of Food Technology is developing well. They have a good knowledge of making bread and biscuits and of the ingredients used. They are well aware of the importance of safe practices when using tools and for hygiene when handling food.
- Older pupils appreciate the need to strengthen their models and have looked at different ways, for example, in their designs of wind buggies, which are very effective and clearly demonstrate pupils' skills of measuring, cutting, assembling, decorating and evaluating. They considered the advantages and disadvantages of using different chassis shape and size, wheels, materials and tools.
- Their skills of sewing, using different stitches, are apparent in a well-made patchwork quilt on display. The same higher order skills are seen in the wide range of beautifully decorated and created hand puppets.

### **Shortcomings**

- Some of the finished items made by the younger pupils in KS2 lack quality and individuality.

## **Information and communications technology**

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2.

### **Good features**

- Pupils learn to use ICT to communicate and handle information, to some degree, in a range of subjects. They have sometimes used a digital camera well to record their work.
- They start using computers in the Nursery and become increasingly capable as they get more practice. In Reception, as in many other classes, their standards are supported by very good resources.
- In KS1, pupils have developed a number of basic skills such as executing program commands, saving their work, using the mouse and pointer, and operating a number of facilities on the Tool Bar such as the airbrush, the spray and the pen. Their work is colourful, well-proportioned and lively, and they use *clipart* well to improve their presentations.
- In KS2, pupils have conducted Internet research about history and geography topics.
- Pupils can find appropriate files in their own directories on a hard disk, and can open and use them. Occasionally, pupils are encouraged to use computers to support their research, for example, by using encyclopaedias on multimedia compact discs.
- In Y4, pupils who were learning how to use spreadsheets for the first time, gained a sense of awe at the way the software automatically calculated columns of figures. They quickly learned how to use the *Autosum* facility.
- Pupils with SEN have become adept at manipulating text, images and icons on the interactive whiteboard. Their capability in using ICT is good, for example, they can select and drag word-objects on the whiteboard using a touch-sensitive pen. These pupils have also used ICT to very good effect in producing entertaining newsletters and stories such as the *Graddage Group Gazette*.
- Pupils in Y6 have written good poetry based on healthy living, the human body, space and force. Their poetry is usually well-structured with good vocabulary. Pupils use word-processing software to combine words and images to good effect. They are learning how to combine images and text with pre-formatted geometric shapes and can create images which move dynamically along a prescribed path in a multimedia presentation.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' use of ICT to record their work in the full range of subjects or for independent research is limited, often because access to the internet has been interrupted by technical problems.

## **History**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

### **Good features**

- In KS1 and KS2, pupils develop good knowledge and understanding of characters and events in the history of Wales and of changes in their local area.
- Pupils in KS1 understand some of the differences between the past and the present and are becoming aware of the passage of time. For example, after a visit to the museum of Welsh life at St Fagan's, pupils knew about the restrictions placed upon Victorian children in avoiding speaking Welsh in school.
- Pupils in Y2 have created a timeline for the development of air-transport and know that Charles Lindberg was the first person to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. They correctly order and sequence photographs and other images by time.
- Pupils in KS2 develop an increasing ability to identify the causes and consequences of historical events. Y3 pupils suggest the comments Queen Boudicca might have made in pre-battle speeches to her soldiers. They gain an increasing knowledge of Celtic jewellery such as the torque.
- By Y5, pupils have a good recall of aspects of Victorian life and understand, for example, that in mid-Victorian times there was a move away from rural to urban living. Pupils also know that machinery gradually replaced manual labour in many jobs and that steam power had a major effect upon transport as the railways replaced canals. A minority of pupils are beginning to understand the difference between primary and secondary sources of evidence.
- Pupils in Y6 know that World War II ended in 1945 and that before that the last line of defence was the Home Guard. They have researched well on the Second World War using books, the internet, oral traditions, CD ROMs, family members' memories, newspapers, diaries and photographs. They know that Anne Frank's diaries showed how she saw events from a very personal standpoint. From listening to older members of the community who came into school to be interviewed pupils appreciate that their evidence is credible because it is from first-hand experience.
- The development of class diaries which chronicled main events in the class's year helped pupils obtain a better sense of the relationship between the past and the present.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils in Y2 tend to lose interest quickly and their indiscipline adversely affects their learning.

## **Geography**

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2.

### **Good features**

- Pupils in both KS1 and KS2 develop good knowledge and understanding, appropriate to their age and ability, of the human and physical features that give Blaen y Maes and the

surrounding area its character. KS1 pupils have conducted traffic and shopping surveys in the area.

- Pupils make good progress in KS1 and KS2 in understanding and using maps.
- Pupils in Y1 understand some of the features of maps such as sea and land and can identify Wales on a map of the British Isles.
- Most pupils can identify the four countries that make up the United Kingdom and can name their capital cities. They use a simple key to indicate major features such as coastline, land and cities. They collect and record information about the weather and use appropriate symbols.
- In lower KS2, pupils examine photographs and maps to identify features of life in different environments. They are beginning to organise their observations into categories. They show awareness of ways in which industry has both damaged and protected the environment.
- Pupils have compared Blaen y Maes with Port Eynon and analysed the main features of each.
- By upper KS2, pupils recognise that there are different reasons for large superstores being placed where they are and have completed surveys to underpin their conclusions.
- Many pupils improve their understanding of geography through practical experiences on visits to places such as Oxwich Bay, Singleton Park, Afan Argoed nature reserve and Borfa House.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' acquisition of geographical knowledge is adversely affected by their narrow vocabulary.

### **Art**

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2, with very good features in painting and printing.

### **Good features**

- Pupils across the school benefit from Paint Workshops with local Welsh artists and a successful Art Club after school. They have had a broad experience of a range of artistic skills, led by talented artists. Examples of silk printing show a good sense of colour and texture. Printmaking work is colourful and shows they are adept at creating striking patterns. The Rainforest Art, in particular, is of very high quality.
- Work with clay enables pupils to develop their understanding of proportion and to pay careful attention to detail. Their gargoyle faces are both striking and amusing.
- The artwork on display around the school, including the large window paintings, is of high quality.

- In KS1, pupils explore the effects of colour mixing and achieve the desired and appropriate colour.
- Pupils develop their skills through the use of different media, which they use confidently.
- In both key stages, pupils study the styles and techniques of famous artists. They make good progress with colour, shape and technique in capturing the essence and mood of these styles in their own paintings.
- Pupils develop their observational skills through sketching, using line and tone to good effect.
- Three-dimensional work shows a good awareness of using different materials to achieve a textured effect. Small and large collages are carefully made and are very effective. One was recently on display in the Grand Theatre, Swansea.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Music**

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2, with very good features in KS2.

#### **Good features**

- Standards of performance in singing during school assemblies are very good.
- Pupils in KS1 select, with help, suitable instruments to reflect the sound of running water. Pupils quickly develop the ability to perform a rhythmic ostinato piece under the teacher's careful direction. They cooperate well with each other and show a good sense of timing in performance. Most are inventive using graphical notation.
- Pupils in Y2 clap out a rhythm using a notation chart and their performance is good in terms of discipline and timing.
- Standards in playing musical instruments are good. A minority of pupils plays a range of woodwind, percussion and brass instruments well.
- Pupils in KS2 improve both their musical knowledge and their understanding of other cultures through their involvement in the school's choir, guitar and recorder groups.
- Pupils keep a steady beat by watching their teacher, by clapping their hands, and clicking their fingers or their tongues. They also keep a steady beat to music by patting one knee at a time. Most use clappers or sticks, tambourines or triangles effectively. They demonstrate an understanding of rests, and sing with good articulation.
- They respond positively to the music of famous composers and are used to appraising music, including the music of Welsh composers. They recognise different instruments such as trumpets or drums.

- Pupils in lower KS2 understand and interpret notation as musical sound and could follow it on a score.
- Pupils show a good understanding of different rhythms, and how they can be combined to make music of an interesting texture, using untuned musical instruments. In practical lessons, pupils show that they are beginning to blend different rhythms together successfully. They beat out a rhythmic ostinato on a drum kit with fill-riffs on bass drums, snare drums and hi-hat cymbals.
- Pupils in upper KS2 sang well together, in tune, with clear diction, in Welsh and English. Pupils identify songs and the musicals they originated from. Their singing is haunting, true and full of *hwyl*.
- In Y6, pupils have written about listening to the music played on violin, cello, flute, piccolo, clarinet, horn and the harp. They have raised their understanding through extra-curricular work with the Welsh National Opera at Brangwyn Hall.

### **Shortcomings**

There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Physical education**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

#### **Good features**

- In KS1, pupils are developing good body control, and their awareness and use of space is improving. They produce a range of movements and shapes.
- Most pupils work hard and make a determined effort to improve their performance, paying particular attention to their teacher's instructions.
- They work well as individuals and in pairs and are willing to demonstrate good practice.
- In KS2, pupils are aware of the beneficial effect of exercising on their bodies and of the importance of warming up and cooling down.
- Pupils make a good response to music. They move well to a beat, following instructions on movements accurately. They work hard to improve the movements, and demonstrate a good sense of rhythm, control and balance.
- Pupils have good skills of passing, dribbling and controlling a ball. Their use of space, pace and change of direction to beat an opponent is developing well. They work hard to improve their skills in pairs and in short game situations. Older pupils have benefited from good links with Swansea City Football Club.
- The school engages in a number of sporting activities with other local schools, and equal opportunities are given to both boys and girls to play various team games.
- They are enthusiastic, take turns, play to rules and are happy to demonstrate to their peers.

- Extra-curricular activities, such as games training, have a beneficial effect on the standards of pupils' skills.
- All pupils in KS2 attend swimming lessons during the school year and records show that the vast majority are competent swimmers by the end of the key stage.

### **Shortcomings**

- In KS1, the older pupils' awareness and use of space is under developed.

### **Religious education**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

#### **Good features**

- In KS1 and KS2, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Christian festivals. Visits to places of worship, such as St. Teilo's Church, help pupils to a better understanding of religious symbolism and the reasons for rites and rituals.
- In KS1, pupils know some stories from the Bible and they understand the characteristics of being a Christian, in both a spiritual and a moral context. They understand the need for and the importance of rules in daily life.
- In Y2, they know that babies are christened in Church as a part of their entry into the Christian faith.
- In KS2, pupils gain confidence to talk about the values that are important to them.
- In KS2, pupils gain some understanding of the use of symbols in the Epiphany, such as candles in churches, the cross, and the idea of Jesus Christ as the Light of the World.
- Pupils have studied religious clothing, such as that worn by monks and nuns, as well as the prayers written to celebrate Harvest.
- In Y5, pupils gain a good understanding of the way people agree to behave in certain ways when they are married, as well as the value of virtues such as honesty, faithfulness, openness and sharing. Pupils gain a better knowledge of marriage through role-play, as well as through listening to the personal anecdotes of their teachers. Pupils with SEN in particular gain an insight into this aspect of Christian belief and ritual.
- In Y6, pupils improve their moral education through religious education, showing a good awareness of the dangers of drug or alcohol misuse. They know that there are good drugs such as penicillin or anaesthetics, and that addiction involves not being able to stop taking a drug.
- Stories from other World faiths, as well as those originating in Wales, provide the children with a good base on which to develop their opinions about culture and faith. They are competent in answering questions about the story of Rama and Sita, have made Diwali lamps and Rangoli patterns. They have learned about Islamic rites and have visited a mosque.

- Pupils have gained knowledge about the Holy Books of different faiths such as the Jewish Torah, or the Qu’ran, the Holy Book of Islam. They also know that people of faith pray in mosques, synagogues and churches.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils have little idea of the standards they attain or what they need to do to improve further because there are few assessment systems in place.
- Pupils in Y2 are confused about the meaning of symbols of baptism such as water and light.

## **8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **8.1 Progress since the last inspection**

Overall, the school has made good progress in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection. Key issues from the previous inspection and the school’s response to them are as follows:

*Key Issue 1. Give urgent attention to the safety issues identified during the inspection.*  
Satisfactory progress made.

*Key Issue 2. Raise standards in Welsh in KS2, and address the shortcomings identified in other subjects.*  
Good progress made.

*Key Issue 3. Amend the SDP to include precise and quantifiable targets in order to make it an effective document for school improvement.*  
Good progress made.

*Key Issue 4. Further improve the quality of some schemes of work and teachers’ termly and weekly planning.*  
Good progress made.

*Key Issue 5. Develop systematic procedures for managing curriculum development and for monitoring and evaluating the standards achieved by pupils.*  
Satisfactory progress made.

*Key Issue 6. Sustain and develop further the level of support for pupils with SEN.*  
Good progress made.

*Key Issue 7. Continue to develop home/school links with parents.*  
Good progress made.

**In addition to the above, the school has improved standards in nine subjects since the last inspection.**

## **8.2 Key issues for action**

Within the context of a school which has made good progress in improving its provision and the standards its pupils achieve, the governors, headteacher and staff now need to:

- raise standards in speaking and listening in KS1 and KS2, and in all subjects and year-groups where they are no better than satisfactory;
- improve all aspects of self-evaluation;
- raise the quality of teaching where it is no better than satisfactory;
- improve pupils' rates of attendance;
- improve the quality of reporting to parents; and
- further improve the external security around the school to better protect it from vandalism.

## APPENDIX

### A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Blaen y Maes Primary School
School type	Community
Age -range of pupils	3 to 11
Address of school	Broughton Avenue, Blaen y Maes, Swansea
Post-Code	SA5 5LW
Telephone Number	01792 583366

Acting headteacher	Mr Allan Edwards
Date of appointment	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2002
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Cllr Grenville Phillips
Registered Inspector	Mr R. A. Isaac
Dates of inspection	7 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> April 2003

### B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	18	24	19	18	23	24	28	31	185

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	8	5	10.1

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	16 : 1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	12 : 1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in special classes	n/a
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	24
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	1.3 : 1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>				
	R	KS1	KS2	Whole School
Term 1	82.4	88.03	87.9	87.24
Term 2	84.6	88	87.1	87
Term 3	82.6	84.3	88.1	86.41

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	70%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	5

### C. Results of National Curriculum assessments and public examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results: 2002			Number of pupils in Y2: 36					
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	4
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	13	50	38	0	0
		National	0	4	13	63	20	0
EN: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	2	8	58	33	0	0
		National	0	4	14	54	28	0
EN: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	42	21	38	0	0
		National	0	5	13	71	10	0
EN: Speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	13	46	42	0	0
		National	0	2	11	64	22	0
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	21	29	50	0	0
		National	0	2	9	61	26	0
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	8	50	42	0	0
		National	0	2	10	68	20	0
<b>CORE SUBJECT INDICATOR:</b> Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, and English by Teacher Assessment								
In School:		29						
In Wales:		81						

National Curriculum Assessment KS 2 Results:2002			No. of pupils in Y6: 36									
Percentage of pupils at each level												
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	11	36	42	11	0
		National	0	0	1	0	1	5	16	45	29	0
	Test/Task	School	0		0	0	0	6	33	47	8	0
		National	0	2	0	1	0	4	12	41	38	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	3	0	14	14	56	14	0
		National	0	0		0	1	4	19	46	27	0
	Test/Task	School	0		0	0	0	11	17	56	11	0
		National	0	2		0	0	4	19	43	30	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	11	14	53	22	0
		National	0	0		0	0	2	13	49	33	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	14	17	61	8	0
		National	0	3		0	0	1	10	47	38	N
<b>CORE SUBJECT INDICATOR:</b> Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and English												
by Teacher Assessment						by Test						
In the school:		53				In the school:		50				
In Wales:		68				In Wales:		68				

## D. Evidence base of the inspection

The inspection team of three inspectors, including the lay inspector, was at the school for a total of 11 inspector days.

- During this time, all teachers were visited and all classes were seen. A total of 50 sessions, part sessions or interactions were inspected and a wide range of pupils' work was scrutinised. Inspectors talked to pupils about their work and life in the school, and listened to them reading their own work and extracts from class reading books.
- The full range of documentation made available by the school was scrutinised. Discussions were held with the acting headteacher, deputy headteacher, governors, teachers, classroom assistants, other staff and pupils. Pre- and post-inspection meetings were held with governors and staff, but only seven parents attended a pre-inspection meeting with inspectors. Questionnaires completed by parents were also analysed.

## E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

{PRIVATE }Team member	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr Rob Isaac Registered Inspector	English ICT History Geography Music Religious Education	Context Main findings Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning Teaching The curriculum Leadership and efficiency Progress since the last inspection Key issues for action
Mrs Janet Warr Lay Inspector		Behaviour and attitudes Attendance Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry
Mr Merfyn D Jones Team Inspector	Early Years Welsh second language Mathematics Science Design and technology Art Physical education	Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum Assessment, recording and reporting Provision for pupils with SEN Self-evaluation Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

### *Acknowledgement*

*The registered inspector and team wish to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, and pupils for their co-operation and courtesy before and during the inspection.*