

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

**BLAINA INFANT SCHOOL  
HIGH STREET  
BLAINA  
BLAENAU GWENT  
NP13 3BN**

**SCHOOL NUMBER: 677/2196**

**DATE OF INSPECTION: 25-27 MARCH 2002**

**BY**

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**DATE: 16 MAY 2002**

**UNDER ESTYN CONTRACT NUMBER: C/T/91/01P**

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## CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

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

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

## GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE REPORT IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER :**

ACCAC	-	Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales)
BEST	-	Building Excellent Schools Together
CoP	-	Code of Practice
EBP	-	Education Business Partnership
EWO	-	Education Welfare Officer
GB-		Governing Body
ICT	-	Information and Communications Technology
IEP	-	Individual Education Plan
KS	-	Key Stage
NAfW	-	National Assembly for Wales
NC	-	National Curriculum
NNEB	-	National Nursery Education Board
NVQ	-	National Vocational Qualification
PSE	-	Personal and Social Education
PTA	-	Parent-Teacher Association
R	-	Reception
SDP	-	School Development Plan
SEN	-	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	-	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SMT	-	Senior Management Team
Y	-	Year

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## **PART 2: THE INSPECTION SCHEDULE**

### **1. CONTEXT**

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

Blaina is a community infant school which is situated in the small former mining town of the same name. Nearly all pupils attend from the local area which is considered to be economically disadvantaged. There is a recently opened small unit for four pupils with SEN relating to difficulties with communication. These pupils travel some distance to attend on a full-time basis. There are five classes in the main school and a nursery class, which generally admits children on a part-time basis until they reach the reception stage, when they attend full-time. There are 105 pupils in R to Y2 and 23.5 full-time equivalent children in the nursery; 33 children are of reception age. Overall, there are 128.5 pupils on roll; numbers have decreased from 140.5 in 1999. In the spring term of 1997, when the school was last inspected, there were 161.5 pupils on roll. All pupils have English as their first language and none comes from an ethnic minority background. The school considers that pupils come from homes which are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. The intake covers the full range of abilities, although on the whole many enter the nursery with below average levels of basic skills.

About 24% of pupils are considered eligible for free school meals. There are 21 pupils who are identified as requiring SEN support between stages one to four of the CoP. There are five pupils who have statements of SEN, two of whom have some modification of the NC and one for whom the NC is disapplied.

The head presently has temporary responsibility for the leadership and management of Blaina Junior School, which occupies another site in the area. In the last two years one teacher has joined and no teachers have left the school.

The school has a clear and extensive statement of aims which relate to providing an appropriate education for children of this age and to helping them achieve well. Currently the school has set realistic and appropriate targets to raise standards further.

### **2. MAIN FINDINGS**

#### **The main findings of the report**

Blaina Infant School is a good school which provides well for its pupils.

- The educational provision for children under five in the nursery and reception classes is good. Starting from a lower than average base, children achieve well in all areas of learning and most, but not all, are ready to begin the NC by the age of five. The quality of the educational provision for the under-fives, therefore, taken overall, is appropriate to their needs and they make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

- Standards achieved in the six areas of learning are:

<b>Area of Learning</b>	<b>Nursery</b>	<b>Reception</b>
Language, Literacy and Communication Skills	Good	Good
Personal and social Development	Good	Good
Mathematical Development	Good	Good
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Good	Good
Physical Development	Good	Good
Creative Development	Good	Good

- Standards achieved in subjects of the NC and religious education are as follows:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>KS1</b>
English	Good
Mathematics	Good
Science	Good
Welsh as a second language	Very good
Design and technology	Good
Information technology	Very good
History	Very good
Geography	Good
Art	Very good
Music	Good
Physical education	Satisfactory
Religious education	Good

- Standards of achievement are very good in 13% of the work seen, good in 57% and satisfactory in 30%.
- Standards in the key skills of listening, reading, writing, application of number and ICT across the curriculum are good; in speaking they are satisfactory. Pupils in KS1 do not express themselves as extensively as they could.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about the multicultural nature of modern society. Arrangements to recognise and promote respect for individual differences of race and religion are thorough and put into effect sensitively and effectively. The school gives due regard to the culture and traditions of Wales through its Cwricwlwm Cymreig.
- Standards of behaviour are good across the school. Pupils try hard to please their teachers and this has a positive impact on the quality of their work. There are effective arrangements to promote good behaviour systematically and to eliminate any form of discrimination. The school is mindful of the need to promote equal access to the curriculum and to monitor pupils' progress in terms of race and gender.
- Standards of attendance are satisfactory and nearly all pupils arrive at school punctually. The school complies with the requirements of NAFW Circular 3/99.

- The quality of teaching is good overall and is a strength of the school. The best teaching is distributed across the school, including the unit for pupils with SEN.
- Overall in the lessons observed 20% of teaching is very good, 57% good and 23% satisfactory.
- Lessons are carefully planned so that pupils are able to build systematically on what they already know and can do; they are made to feel that their contributions are valued.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and question cleverly so that pupils are encouraged to think carefully. Topics are taught in lively and innovative ways and pupils are made to feel that learning is fun.
- Opportunities to use incidental Welsh in lessons are well exploited and information about pupils' progress is well used when planning ahead.
- Where there are shortcomings in teaching tasks are undemanding and pupils' progress is restricted. Activities tend to fill in time rather than consolidate or extend pupils' previous learning. Additionally, tasks set do not encourage pupils to think things out for themselves and are too prescriptive
- Teachers assess pupils' work very thoroughly. This information is well used to judge the progress individual pupils make and to provide help for them to achieve well.
- The curriculum for children under five is good and fully addresses the areas of learning for children of this age. The curriculum for KS1 is good and all pupils have good access to it.
- Provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils is good and they are well supported by teachers, nursery nurses and teaching assistants. There are good procedures for promoting the well-being and health and safety of pupils.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is very good both within the unit for pupils with difficulties in communication and in the main school. All are very well supported and successfully encouraged to play a full part in their classes; they make satisfactory progress. This is a strength of the school.
- Currently there are no pupils who have English as an additional language. However, the school is able to arrange appropriate support for such pupils if necessary.
- Partnership with parents and the local community is good; there are good links with the junior school to which pupils transfer at the age of seven.
- Partnership with industry is good; staff and pupils have benefited well from links with local education business contacts.
- The quality of self-evaluation is good. A particular strength is the impact of the school's target setting on raising pupils' achievements.

- The head and deputy provide very good leadership. Together they give a very clear sense of direction and purpose to the school. The appropriate aims and values of the school are very evident in its every day life.
- Resources and accommodation are very well used and the provision of teaching and non-teaching staff is very good. However, the role of some co-ordinators is under-developed. Not all have planned visits to classes to look at the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- Governors and senior management at the school work closely together. However, governors are not sufficiently well informed to judge the impact of their spending decisions on the quality of education provided by the school.
- The school is bright and attractive. Pupils' work is given significant prominence in the many thoughtful displays which are found throughout the school. This combines to provide a stimulating environment in which all pupils learn well.
- The school has made good progress in addressing the key issues contained in the last report. High levels of provision and support have been maintained; the head is now ably supported by the deputy in the management of the school; plans and provision for the nursery and reception children have been improved; the accommodation for children under five and outdoor accommodation for the whole school is now good with some very good features.

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

#### **3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning**

Standards of achievement are very good in 13% of the work seen, good in 57% and satisfactory in 30%.

- The provision for children under five in the nursery and reception is good and children make good progress in each of the six areas of learning.
- Starting from a lower than average base, pupils in KS1 reach good standards in English, mathematics and science. However they listen better than they speak; they do not generally use extended speech when responding to questions.
- In comparison to schools nationally an above average percentage of pupils reach the standard expected of seven year olds and in comparison to schools with a similar intake, results at the end of KS1 are better. In relation to the expected level two, 93% reached this in reading, 90% in writing and 97% in mathematics. This is against the national averages of 88% in reading, 89% in writing and 93% in mathematics.
- Standards in Welsh as a second language, history, information technology and art are very good. In geography, design and technology, music and religious education they are good. In physical education they are satisfactory.

- Since the time of the last inspection, standards of achievement have risen in English, mathematics, Welsh as a second language, history, information technology and music. They have remained the same in science, design and technology, art, physical education and religious education.

### **3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum**

Standards in the key skills of listening, reading, writing, application of number and ICT across the curriculum are good; in speaking they are satisfactory.

- Within the range of activities set for the under-fives, children make good progress in the early skills of literacy and numeracy and they develop confidence in operating a computer to support their learning.
- Nearly all pupils speak to adults confidently about their work and express their ideas. However, they are not able to speak fluently for longer periods. Often answers are too short and generally do not extend beyond a few words.
- Pupils listen carefully and show good consideration for others when it is their turn to speak.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to read for a range of purposes. They know how to access information from libraries and other sources.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to use their skills in writing for a range of purposes. They begin to have a good grasp of the basic rules of punctuation and grammar.
- Pupils use their knowledge of number in geography, history and science to collect information and to draw graphs.
- From an early age pupils are encouraged to use the computer regularly to support their learning. They have good access to an impressive new computer suite to learn how to use ICT for a range of purposes.

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

### **4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

- The school provides a positive and supportive environment, in which pupils are confident, happy and secure. The values of caring and respect for others are encouraged by the school and are positively reflected in many aspects of the curriculum. Throughout the school there is a calm endeavour and an ethos of quiet tolerance and understanding of the need of others.
- Assemblies are well planned, varied and thoughtfully guided by the head. Pupils participate enthusiastically and are given appropriate opportunities for reflection. During

the inspection class assemblies were pleasant and happy occasions that were well supported by staff and parents. Statutory requirements are fully met.

- The quality of relationships in the school is good; staff provide good role models for pupils and work hard to create a calm and caring working environment. Pupils' achievements are valued and rewarded and used effectively as a basis for developing positive attitudes.
- Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and these values are positively reinforced through many aspects of the curriculum. Many lessons, stories, every day events and discussion are thoughtfully used to illustrate and reinforce moral precepts and social behaviour.
- Pupils are sociable, polite and welcoming and are clearly familiar with the expectations set by the school.
- Welsh culture and heritage has a secure place in the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged and enabled to appreciate their own cultural traditions and to respect the diversity and richness of other cultures. The school effectively promotes racial harmony. Pupils' understanding of other people's lives, beliefs and traditions is developed through the opportunities provided for shared experiences within the school.
- Pupils readily undertake the responsibilities they are given: they willingly assist with delegated tasks and are eager to help younger pupils and those from the special unit.
- Well developed extra-curricular provision, visitors and links with the local community and churches enrich and extend pupils' learning experiences and enhance their social development.

## **4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes**

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good.

- The school successfully achieves its aims to develop good behaviour through self-discipline. Expectations are clearly explained to pupils through discussion at the start of the year, timely reminders and the prominent display of the school rules. Pupils' efforts in a range of activities are celebrated and rewarded at assemblies and in the weekly books of achievement.
- Members of staff have benefited from behaviour management training over the past three years; this has included classroom support assistants and lunchtime supervisors. The good provision of adult support in all school activities effectively promotes good behaviour. This is particularly noticeable during playtimes, when adult involvement teaches pupils how to play sensibly together.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and supportive and pupils respond positively in their attitudes to work in the classroom. They move sensibly and in an orderly fashion around the school. In assemblies they are attentive and respectful.

- In the classroom, pupils listen well to their teachers. They enjoy their lessons and persevere and concentrate well in the tasks that they are set. They support each other and collaborate well whenever they work together.
- The school has a positive anti-bullying policy. Pupils feel secure and no instance of bullying behaviour was observed during the inspection.
- There have been no exclusions.

### **4.3 Attendance**

Levels of attendance are satisfactory.

- Whole school average attendance remains consistently above 90% in the three terms preceding the inspection. The figures are disproportionately affected by the unsatisfactory attendance of a small number of pupils who are well known to the school.
- Attendance is also adversely affected by the incidence of family holidays in term time. In its communication with parents the school strongly discourages this practice.
- Levels of unauthorised absence fluctuate; they are generally above 1% and rose above 3% in the summer term preceding the inspection.
- The school rigorously monitors the reasons for absence. Registers are checked daily by the school secretary, who telephones the pupils' homes promptly when the reasons for absence are not known. In addition, the head monitors absences on a weekly basis. The computerisation of the attendance statistics is an effective aid to the monitoring process. The school receives good support from the EWO.
- The school has not set itself an overall target for attendance, but parents are contacted formally whenever an individual pupil's level falls below 85%.
- The school's system for the completion of attendance registers complies with the requirements of NAFW Circular 3/99 and is carefully undertaken by class teachers.
- Punctuality is satisfactory overall, although a few pupils arrive late at the start of the school day.

## **5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Teaching**

The quality of teaching is good and is a strength of the school. In the lessons observed, 20% is very good, 57% good and 23% satisfactory. The best teaching is distributed across the school, including the unit for pupils with SEN.

### **Good features**

- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They plan carefully to ensure that lessons build systematically on what pupils already know and can do.
- There is a high level of mutual respect between pupils and teachers, who work effectively to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in lessons and feel valued.
- Pupils are praised warmly and made well aware of how pleased teachers are when they reach the standards set for them.
- Teachers set increasingly challenging work so that many pupils make good progress in lessons.
- Teachers' questioning skills are very good and as a result pupils are encouraged to think carefully about what they see and hear.
- Teachers make the lessons come to life in novel and stimulating ways. For example, in an introductory lesson about life in Victorian times, pupils and teachers share the fun of pretending to live in that period.
- Teachers exploit opportunities well to use incidental Welsh when giving instructions or recognising pupils' efforts.
- Teachers regularly review pupils' achievements and use this information well when planning new work.

### **Shortcomings**

- The tasks at times are undemanding and as a result pupils do not learn anything new.
- Pupils on occasions spend too much time on mundane activities, such as colouring in worksheets, which provides no opportunities to learn more about the subject being studied.
- The pace of learning is sometimes too slow and tasks are over teacher directed and too prescriptive so that pupils have limited opportunities to think for themselves.

## **5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting**

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

- The school's assessment, recording and reporting policies establish clear guidelines for staff. The link between assessment, planning and the teaching and learning process is clearly evident. Lesson objectives and marking form an important part of the school's approach to carrying out assessment.
- NC assessment data is carefully analysed by the head, subject leaders and staff. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and used effectively as a basis for development.

- Initiatives within the school have led to the close analysis of pupils' progress in reading. This development has been significant in evaluating progress and improving standards. Records provide a useful focus for development.
- The arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' achievements and progress are good. The school effectively utilises a combination of statutory tests, assessment data and commercial materials. Information is carefully documented and used to guide the groupings of pupils for mathematics and spelling. Pupils are well supported and arrangements are continuously reviewed in the light of individual pupils' progress.
- Assessments are made at regular intervals in English, mathematics and science. Subject leaders, particularly in these subjects, have developed collections of pupils' work to aid them in judging standards and to ensure that teachers' judgements are consistent. These are used effectively.
- A marking policy assists teachers. In the best examples, pupils are given a clear indication of the strengths of their work and are set targets for improvement. However, there are instances where marking is cursory and is not supported by meaningful comments.
- The tracking system adopted by the school and the special unit is used effectively to identify pupils with SEN.
- The quality of reporting to parents is very good. Reports provide information on standards achieved and indicate how improvements can be made. Parents are invited to school twice a year to discuss their child's progress.

### **5.3 Curriculum**

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements.

- The curriculum in the nursery is planned effectively to enable children to meet the Desirable Outcomes in the six areas of learning. The quality and breadth of provision is good and there is an appropriate balance between adult-directed and self-chosen activities. Thoughtful attention is given to the effective use of time, space and resources.
- Teachers in the reception classes plan together effectively to ensure all pupils receive the same range of experiences. The quality, breadth and balance of planning is good.
- Schemes of work and policy documents are in place for all subjects. These are of good quality and effectively support the planning of teaching and learning. The curriculum in KS1 covers all the subjects of the NC. The time allocated for each subject is appropriate.
- The school has developed a consistent system for medium and short-term planning, which clearly outlines learning objectives, activities and assessment opportunities. The planning provides good information for the development of key skills. There is consistent development of cross-curricular links between subjects.
- The school has a good homework policy which supports learning well.

- Visits to sites of educational and historic interest and the involvement of the local community contribute to the educational standards achieved. Extra-curricular activities develop skills in a range of sporting and cultural areas.
- Good provision and full access to the NC, where appropriate, is made for pupils with SEN in all classes.
- Good provision is made in the special unit for pupils with difficulties who have modified access to the NC. This enables individual pupils' needs to be assessed and met through achievable small steps to success.
- Good provision and support is made for one pupil for whom the NC is disapplied.
- The cwricwlwm Cymreig receives appropriate attention and supports pupils' appreciation of the culture and heritage of Wales.

#### **5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare**

Overall, good provision is made for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils.

- Teaching and non-teaching staff know pupils well and pupils are confident enough to approach them with their problems.
- Good policies exist to promote health and safety, which are monitored effectively by the head, LEA and GB and are implemented consistently by staff. Aspects of hygiene, sex education and substance abuse awareness are incorporated into the health education programme. The school's policies for sex education and exclusion are successfully implemented.
- The head is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and children in care. There are effective measures in place and the head attends meetings when required. Two members of staff currently hold qualifications in first aid training. Good attention is given to ensure that pupils are taught in a safe and secure environment.
- The school has good arrangements to monitor pupils' personal progress through informative personal profiles. Teachers ensure that parents are kept well informed and involved.

#### **5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN**

Overall, very good provision is made for pupils with SEN; this is a strength of the school.

- Approximately one third of all pupils in the main school are identified as requiring SEN support. Currently, five pupils have statements of SEN.
- Since the last inspection, a unit for children with communication difficulties has been added; there are four pupils currently in the unit.
- The special unit provides a consistent and secure environment where pupils are valued. Care is taken to develop their individual needs and self-esteem.

- Very good use is made of all staff to support every aspect of pupils' learning in the unit. Good use is also made of the speech therapist on her weekly visit to the unit.
- Opportunities for inclusion of pupils with SEN in the unit in the life and work of the main school are developing well.
- The school has appropriate procedures and systems for identifying pupils with SEN and in assessing their progress. Learning difficulties are identified, and with assessment and tracking procedures in place, pupils' performance is monitored and reviewed on a termly basis.
- The SEN policy is comprehensive and complies with the new revised CoP and the BEST programme.
- The SENCO leads day-to-day activities and works effectively with class teachers, support staff and the governor for SEN. The SEN register is reviewed regularly. Parents are informed and involved with supporting their child's level of achievement at the relevant stages of the new revised CoP.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress, relative to their age and ability.
- Where appropriate, the involvement of learning support staff makes a significant contribution to the programmes of work. Support includes individual, in-class support and small group sessions, which focus on identified targets for improvement. Liaison between the SENCO, class teachers and support staff is very good.
- The IEP's provide very good information and targets are stated in observable, measurable terms that can be clearly monitored and reviewed to inform new targets.
- Specific resources, including ICT, fully support the range of SEN pupils currently in the school.

## **5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions**

Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions is good.

- In the pre-inspection meetings and in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire there is overwhelming support from parents for the quality of communication and the school's encouragement for parents' involvement in the daily life and work of the school.
- Parents receive a steady flow of letters, termly calendars of events and curriculum information. There are also prominently displayed notice boards for the benefit of parents. The notice board situated at the entrance to the nursery effectively illustrates the content of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
- There is an open door policy for parents to approach the school with any query or concern. There is also ready access to each class teacher at the door of the classrooms at

the end of each school day. Consultation evenings are held twice a year and are generally well attended.

- The school's prospectus and the GB's annual report to parents meet the recommendations of the NAFW. The home-school agreement also meets statutory requirements.
- A number of parents provide valuable support in a range of classroom activities and by accompanying pupils on educational visits. Over past years the school has provided a series of literacy and numeracy workshops for parents. They have benefited from these and have learnt ways of supporting their children's learning. Similar benefits are being provided by the current Acorn ICT workshops.
- The PTA is an effective and enthusiastic organisation that raises significant sums of money to provide valuable additional learning resources for the school.
- The school is well supported by the community at large and pupils are made aware of the local heritage in their studies in a number of areas of the curriculum. Members of the local community and public service organisations are regular visitors and contribute to pupils' understanding of their community, such as local clergy, the fire service, the health service and the mountain rescue team. There is also strong community support for school events and fund raising initiatives.
- Links with other schools are effective. There is a strong partnership with the local junior school to which Y2 pupils transfer. Transition arrangements are well organised and there is curricular co-operation between staff, especially in general planning, SEN and the core subjects. There are also beneficial links with the local cluster of primary schools. Whenever required, the school receives support and advice from the local comprehensive school.
- The school encourages and welcomes the placements of NVQ and NNEB students from local tertiary colleges and pupils benefit from the additional support. Some students from the comprehensive school also attend for their work experience placements. There is a formal partnership with a teacher training institution, which also benefits pupils.

## **5.7 Partnership with Industry**

Partnership with industry is good.

- The school makes good use of opportunities provided in the locality for suitable partnerships with industry.
- There is a profitable link with the EBP, which is funding a current job-shadowing scheme for a member of staff at a local branch of a national supermarket chain, which is designed to result in a resource pack for teaching and learning. Members of staff have also benefited from EBP sponsored courses in data handling, general ICT skills and design and technology.
- Pupils are made aware of the world of work through visits from local professionals in the health and fire service. Pupils' understanding of environmental issues, such as waste

disposal and recycling, has been enhanced by visits to the local authority works department.

- Local business is used as a learning resource when pupils visit local shops and the post office. Many businesses generously support fund raising in the school, for example by donating prizes.

## **6. MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement**

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

- The school reviews the progress pupils make very carefully and analyses thoroughly the information it has about the standards individual pupils achieve. This is very well used to help raise standards of achievement.
- There is a thorough process for evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses and for putting in place well thought out priorities to effect improvement.
- The school has put together well considered out strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy, which are having a significant impact on raising standards in English and mathematics.
- The head regularly looks at the quality of teaching and learning in classes across the school and some co-ordinators have similar opportunities. However this practice is currently linked to the school's procedures for performance management and is not focused on providing co-ordinators with opportunities to judge the success of initiatives they are pursuing.
- Good use is made of the SDP to plan ahead and to address thoroughly targets for improvement.

### **6.2 Leadership and Efficiency**

The quality of leadership and efficiency provided by the head and deputy is very good. Governors provide sound leadership.

- The head and deputy give a clear sense of direction to the work of the school and work closely together. This ensures that, when the head is involved in duties associated with the running of Blaina Junior School, the infant school continues to function smoothly and effectively.
- Staff are committed to the school and are hardworking. There is a positive and very constructive ethos and there are high expectations of pupils and staff.
- The head has carefully and accurately identified the long term strategic needs of the school and has well established plans in place to continue to raise standards.

- Procedures are in place for the head and some co-ordinators to look at the success of teaching and learning occurring in classrooms.
- The role of the subject co-ordinator in looking at standards of work and the quality of teachers' planning is good, but teachers have limited opportunities to visit classes to judge the success of initiatives that they are pursuing and to see if agreed ways of working are followed consistently.
- There is a very detailed and relevant statement of aims, which is clearly expressed; the school's aims and values are very evident in the day-to-day life of the school.
- The GB is well informed and works closely with the head and staff. Many governors show a strong sense of commitment to the school. However, they do not evaluate thoroughly enough the impact of their major spending decisions in terms of the educational outcomes achieved.
- The budget is very well managed and this ensures that all available resources are well used to promote pupils' learning.
- Day to day routines are efficient and administrative procedures are smooth and unobtrusive. The most recent auditor's report found no significant weaknesses in the way the school was administered financially.

### **6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources**

The provision of staffing, accommodation and resources for learning is good overall.

- There is a generous provision of staff to meet the needs of the number of pupils on roll.
- Staff are well qualified and effectively deployed and have undertaken appropriate and relevant professional development. Learning support assistants, both within the special unit and in the main school, are very effectively deployed and make a substantial contribution to the help these pupils receive and the progress they make.
- Lunchtime supervision is good and dinner time helpers are used effectively.
- The accommodation is spacious and internally the school provides an orderly and stimulating environment for learning. A strong feature of this is the very attractive way in which pupils' work is displayed. This reflects the value teachers place upon it and the wide and interesting curriculum provided. The external environment has been much improved and contains attractive gardens and play areas which are well set out. These provide good opportunities for children in the nursery, in the main school and in the special unit to develop their physical and social skills.
- The caretaker and cleaning staff work hard to ensure that the school is clean and well maintained.
- Learning resources are good in quality and quantity and have a positive impact on the standards pupils achieve; they are generally readily to hand and well used.

## 7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

### Standards achieved by pupils

#### Provision for the under-fives

Generally children begin in the nursery with below average levels of basic skills, but by the time they leave the reception class to begin KS1, nearly all are ready to begin the NC and have made good progress. The quality of the educational provision for the under-fives, therefore, taken overall, is appropriate to their needs and they make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

#### Good features

##### Nursery

- Standards in language, literacy and communication skills are good. Children listen to stories attentively and are able to repeat the main features of well known stories. They begin to build up a vocabulary to describe what they see and do, using a widening range of words to express their ideas. They know that words carry meaning.
- Standards in personal and social development are good. Children play and co-operate well, showing increasing independence when selecting and carrying out activities. They show care and concern for others.
- Standards in mathematical development are good. Children begin to use number names and to count numbers in the correct order. They are able to sort objects by one property and begin to try out a range of tools and techniques, for example when working on the computer.
- Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are good. Children notice and are able to describe some of the features of their local area.
- Standards in physical development are good. Children are able to move freely and with confidence using the very good range of outdoor equipment available well when playing. They use space successfully, for example when riding large wheeled toys. They try hard when practising a new skill, for example when climbing. They are aware of the effects of exercise on their bodies.
- Standards in creative development are good. When drawing, children use lines to enclose a space and begin to use these shapes to represent objects. They move carefully and respond to music. They sing tunefully and enjoy taking part in songs they know well; they perform the appropriate actions to these songs very enthusiastically. They are able to recognise and repeat simple rhythms and compose some themselves.
- The teachers, teaching assistants and nursery nurses provide very good support to all children. Teaching in the nursery is based on a good understanding of the needs of children of this age and work is well matched to children's stages of development.

## **Reception**

- Standards in language, literacy and communication skills are good. Children speak confidently to adults and to other children and develop an appropriate vocabulary. They are able to recognise and repeat the initial sounds in words and letters and know that words are made up of different sounds. They enjoy listening to stories and know that information can be found in books. They begin to write letters and words in an appropriate legible style.
- Standards in personal and social development are good. Children maintain their efforts for long periods of time and wish to please their teachers. They show confidence and have an awareness of the boundaries set and the expectations teachers have of them.
- Standards in mathematical development are good. Children are able to recognise number names and figures within ten. They are able to count on and recognise the order in which numbers fall. They are able to count the total number of objects contained in two groups and begin to use mathematical names for regular three dimensional shapes.
- Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are good. Children are able to examine objects to find out more about them, for example from the Victorian period. They are aware that some things have changed and others remain the same when comparing daily life of the Victorian times with that of today. They begin to gain an awareness of the beliefs of other people.
- Standards in physical development are good. Children are able to experiment with different ways of moving and begin to learn how to throw and catch accurately. They are able to interpret music and express their feelings in dance. They are aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy life through eating and exercising properly. They use simple tools and techniques carefully and competently.
- Standards in creative development are good. Children are able to explain what happens when you mix colour and to choose colours for particular purposes. They know how to play a role in an activity.
- Activities are well planned to ensure that children learn systematically.

## **English**

Overall standards in English are good.

### **Good features**

- The thorough planning and whole school approach to the organisation and management of literacy sessions contributes positively to the standards achieved. Implementation of agreed structures are systematically monitored and pupils benefit from the continuity provided in classroom routines and practices.
- Pupils develop satisfactory speaking skills. Some can explain what they are doing when involved in a task and a few can discuss aspects of their work and pose relevant questions.

- During their big book work, they focus appropriately on texts and talk about characters, punctuation, book conventions and the structure of poetry. Their recall of earlier learning is good.
- Standards of listening are good. The majority of pupils listen attentively and begin to adapt their speech to a widening range of demands.
- Standards in reading are good. Pupils read at an appropriate level with developing fluency. During shared reading sessions using big books, they read confidently and involve themselves purposefully in the discussions of the text.
- The majority of pupils can talk about their favourite books and authors, giving reasons for their choice. When reading poetry and prose aloud they use appropriate emphasis and expression. Some communicate the meaning of the text effectively.
- Pupils develop early independence in their writing and achieve good standards. Younger pupils begin to apply simple punctuation and the majority are aware of the importance of spacing words for the reader. By the end of the key stage they make good attempts at spelling a range of words independently. Good use is made of spelling books.
- Pupils develop writing skills progressively in response to a range of experiences and increase their awareness of how to vary their language for particular purposes and readers. The presentation of written work and handwriting progresses well throughout the school.

### **Shortcomings**

- Some pupils are slow to enter into class discussion or to express their opinions, especially when they are provided with insufficient opportunities to develop their confidence in the use of language. They do not generally speak at length. Speaking skills, involving extended responses to questions and sustaining points of view in discussion, are insufficiently developed.

## **Mathematics**

Standards in mathematics are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils develop a sound understanding of mathematical ideas through the use of small apparatus and games.
- Pupils are able to add odd and even numbers confidently and correctly. They are able to count and recognise ordinal and cardinal numbers.
- By the end of the key stage pupils are able to explain their thinking and the methods they use in reaching a solution to a problem.
- Pupils know addition and subtraction facts to twenty and can recall quickly the two times and five times tables.
- Pupils know the value of coins and are able to count money and give change correctly.

- Older pupils are able to interpret block and pictorial graphs well.
- Pupils learn to measure using non-standard and standard units.
- Pupils begin to tell the time and are able to identify the hour, quarter past, half past and quarter to the hour.

## **Science**

Standards in science are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils have a good understanding of life processes and living things, materials and physical processes.
- Pupils know the importance of a healthy diet and know that plants require food, light, water and heat.
- Pupils plan investigations carefully and are able to make a simple hypothesis, for example when investigating floating and sinking.
- Pupils discuss their ideas and findings confidently and are able to draw relevant conclusions from their findings.
- Pupils are aware of the forces involved in making an object move.
- Pupils know how to construct a simple circuit.
- Pupils know how to distinguish materials by their properties. They know that some substances change and other stay the same when heated or cooled.

## **Welsh second language**

Standards in Welsh are very good.

### **Good features**

- Incidental Welsh is used effectively by all teachers and pupils respond appropriately to instructions throughout the school day. Words and phrases are displayed prominently and support pupils' progress.
- Pupils confidently use a wide range of words and phrases. Their pronunciation is generally good and the range of their vocabulary increases steadily.
- Pupils make good progress in learning basic vocabulary. They are confident when answering questions about themselves and respond appropriately to simple instructions and commands. Pupils in Y1 recognise and know their colours and most pupils can count to twenty in Welsh.

- Pupils in Y1 are increasingly confident in responding to a variety of language patterns and recall of previous work is generally good and sometimes very good.
- Pupils in Y2 are able to express their likes and dislikes relating to food preferences, correctly labelling their findings on posters they design. They make very good progress in their attempts at spelling new vocabulary.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills.
- The assistance of the athrowes bro in supporting and encouraging teachers in the delivery and organisation of the subject programme impacts positively on pupils' progress.

## **Design and technology**

Although no specific lessons were observed in design and technology, evidence in the school indicates that standards are good.

### **Good features**

- Throughout the key stage pupils regularly plan out, design and make products. They experience cutting, shaping, sticking and joining materials and undertake finishing techniques.
- Pupils are develop good skills in planning their designs. They draw designs for castles and vehicles and make good models with a range of materials.
- Pupils in Y2 understand the function of wheels and axles and are able to improve and modify a vehicle. They choose suitable materials and are able to test and modify their finished product.
- Cross-curricular links with other subjects are developed. For example, pupils understand the use of forces and friction when studying castles in Wales. They carry out fair testing and communicate their ideas using tables.
- Pupils demonstrate an awareness of shape and size and measure accurately. They can plan and label parts of a box home.
- Pupils record their ideas using words, pictures and sketches and discuss their designs as they develop.
- Pupils use tools and equipment appropriately with due regard for health and safety.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no major shortcomings, but some tasks are over-directed by teachers. In these cases, pupils are not challenged appropriately to generate, plan and carry out their own design and make activities.

## **Information technology**

Standards in information technology are very good.

### **Good features**

- Work in ICT is introduced at an early age. Pupils in KS1 make confident use of computers and control the mouse well to operate a number of programs. Younger pupils are able to follow teacher directions and send programmable toys around an area.
- Across the key stage pupils use computer equipment with enthusiasm and develop in confidence.
- Good use is made of ICT to support work in subjects across the curriculum. Teachers devise purposeful and meaningful tasks that interest pupils and extend their learning. Good use is made of the digital camera to record events enabling cross-curricular learning experiences to be shared by all staff and parents.
- In all classes pupils' word processing skills develop appropriately and examples of children's work indicate that they build systematically on their previous skills.
- Pupils in KS1 produce work of good quality using a painting program. They move the brush around the screen and experiment with marks, lines and curves using different colours. They use tools well on the screen. The majority show good control when using the mouse to drag and move.
- Some pupils are able to identify icons for files and folders. They use the return key, space bar and delete key successfully.
- Pupils begin to handle information well; they collect, analyse, process and present data.
- By the end of the key stage pupils are able to transfer information from one source to another; they can combine text and create informative work in many subject areas.

## **History**

Standards in history are very good.

### **Good features**

- Throughout the school pupils' historical knowledge and understanding is enhanced through first-hand experiences of the past and the effective use of visits to places of historical interest. Pupils show an interest in their studies and have good recall of the knowledge they have gained.
- By the end of KS1 pupils are able to distinguish between aspects of their own lives and those of people in the past. They are enabled to develop early skills in historical enquiry through asking questions about the past.

- Pupils develop a very good understanding of events, by being given appropriate opportunities using a range of historical sources, including primary and secondary documents and a very good range of artefacts,
- Pupils can recall facts about the periods, peoples and events they have studied. They have a good sense of the social aspect of history and show empathy with characters and events. They can effectively create poetry about people and places of the past.
- By the end of the key stage, pupils have a very good awareness of chronology, for example in following the life story of Laura Ashley. Younger pupils are aware of the similarities and differences between historical periods.
- Pupils are able to communicate their knowledge and understanding of historical events in a variety of ways; a good example is the recent battle at the castle, reported as a newspaper article using ICT. Some pupils make good use of writing for other audiences by inviting them to a party at the castle.
- There are good cross-curricular links and references to the cwricwlwm Cymreig.

## **Geography**

Standards in geography are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils are encouraged to work both independently and collaboratively in all classes.
- By the end of KS1 pupils have made a secure start in their ability to make and use maps and plans in and around the school and its locality.
- Pupils in Y1 are able to use simple graphical terms and make pictorial maps using simple co-ordinates. Some in Y2 are able to plot co-ordinates on a map for places of interest in their own locality. Very good use is made of support staff and work is suitably differentiated.
- By the end of the key stage pupils have a good understanding of their own locality and of the similarities and differences with other places. Studies of Northhampton and New Zealand, for example, indicate they have a sound knowledge of contrasting features.
- Pupils are able to compare weather types in English and Welsh; they can apply this information. They also use and compare secondary sources to obtain information about other places.
- Throughout the school good use is made of maps and photographs to support pupils' understanding.

## **Art**

Standards in art are very good.

### **Good features**

- Standards in art are demonstrated by the high quality of the displays of pupils' own work and the overall emphasis throughout the school on the importance of visual art.
- Pupils are well aware of, and can paint, in the styles of famous artists. The works of Welsh artists are given appropriate emphasis.
- Pupils are able to blend colours together to achieve a desired effect.
- Pupils are beginning to understand and appreciate perspective and have a good understanding of how to draw accurately.
- Pupils are provided with very good opportunities to use a range of media and to develop their skills in handling them, for example when making masks and three dimensional figures.

## **Music**

Standards in music are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils sing with enthusiasm and in tune. They have a good sense of rhythm and they pay appropriate attention to breathing, dynamics and pitch.
- Pupils know a range of topic related songs, including rhymes and songs. They vary their voices to produce loud and quiet singing and can describe the texture of a piece of music. They respond appropriately to instructions and can remember and repeat musical patterns.
- Y1 pupils handle percussion instruments appropriately and use them effectively when accompanying songs. In Y2 they use clapping sounds effectively in time to the rhythm of a variety of songs. They listen attentively to their own and other music.
- Pupils sing well and appropriate attention is given to the music and culture of Wales.
- Pupils demonstrate their wide repertoire of songs and hymns in their performances.
- Pupils' performing skills are supported by extra-curricular activities, which include a recorder club and country dancing.
- Entertaining musical concerts, written by staff members, have raised the profile of music in the school and are well received by parents.

## **Physical education**

Standards in physical education are satisfactory within KS1.

### **Good features**

- Pupils know how to use space well when playing small ball games.
- Pupils develop good skills in sending and receiving.
- Pupils are able to get out and put away their equipment independently.
- Pupils know something about the physical effect of exercise on their bodies and the importance of warming up and cooling down before and after exercise.
- Generally pupils listen carefully and follow instructions accurately.
- Pupils begin to understand how to compete fairly and how to contribute in a team game.
- Pupils are able to use outside play resources sensibly during lessons and at play times to enhance their physical development, moving with control and co-ordination.
- Pupils move with confidence and imagination in dance.

### **Shortcomings**

- Some pupils do not make enough effort to improve their techniques, for example when learning how to control a ball.
- Some pupils do not follow instructions in gymnastics and as a result make little progress.
- Some pupils do not use the space available when carrying out movements.

## **Religious education**

Standards in religious education are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils have a good understanding of simple Bible stories.
- Pupils learn about the important elements of worship.
- Pupils are able to distinguish between various religions and know their distinct features; for example they know something of the Muslim faith and how Muslims celebrate their festivals They make good use of artefacts to learn about these different religions.
- Pupils are aware of special places and special days in their own and other pupils' lives.
- Pupils know through first hand experience gained in a mock wedding of the significant features and beliefs expressed in this service.

## 8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### 8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

Overall, good progress has been made in implementing the main recommendations of the last report. The school is better now than it was.

The previous inspection report published in the Spring Term 1997 identified the following key issues for action:

- Maintain the high level of provision and human support.
  - Review the workload of the head.
  - Improve the balance and timing of activities within the school day.
  - Update curriculum planning and provision for the nursery and reception children.
  - Review the accommodation for children under five and the outdoor accommodation for the whole school.
- 
- Since the time of the last inspection there has been effective action to maintain the high level of provision and human support for teaching and learning. Resources, including non-teaching staff, are well deployed and well used. Teaching assistants and other helpers make a significant contribution to the success of the school.
  - The workload of the head has been reviewed and modified. Effective arrangements have been made to strengthen the role of the deputy. Overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school is now shared between the head and deputy. Since the time of the last inspection the head has been given additional temporary responsibility for the leadership and management of the Blaina Junior School, which is situated on another site. The infant school functions efficiently because the school is now well led by an experienced SMT.
  - The planned curriculum is now wide and interesting and time is used effectively to teach it.
  - Planning for lessons in the nursery and reception classes is thorough and is wholly based on the Desirable Learning Outcomes for Children's Learning.
  - Since the time of the last inspection there have been changes for the good in the accommodation provided for nursery and reception classes. There have been significant improvements to the outdoor play facilities for all pupils and for children under five. Pupils within the SEN unit have the use of their own well appointed safe play area. Provision of outdoor play activities for the nursery are very good and include regular opportunities for them to use large wheel toys and adventurous equipment.

- Outdoor provision for pupils in KS1 has also been improved, for example in the marking of playground games and the provision of small games activities at play times.

## **8.2 Key Issues for Action**

The GB, head and staff should:

1. raise standards in subjects which are satisfactory;
2. raise standards in speaking across the curriculum by providing more planned opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their speech patterns;
3. strengthen the role of the subject co-ordinators so that all have regular planned opportunities to visit classes to evaluate the success of initiatives they are pursuing and the standards pupils are achieving;
4. put in place arrangements for the GB to judge the impact of its spending decisions on the education of pupils.

**The inspectors who visited Blaina Infants School would like to thank the governors, head, staff and pupils for their courtesy and co-operation during the inspection.**

## APPENDIX

### A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Blaina Infants School
School type	Community
Age -range of pupils	3-7
Address of school	High Street Blaina Gwent
Post-Code	NP13 3BN
Telephone Number	01495 290232

Headteacher	Miss Mary Gash
Date of appointment	April 1989
Chair of Governors	Mr D Morgan
Registered Inspector	Mr Peter Mathias
Dates of inspection	25th - 27th March 2002

### B. School Data and Indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>						
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Total
Number of pupils	23.5	33	29	41	2	128.5

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	8	0.6	8.6

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	15.3:1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	5.8:1
Pupil:adult (fte) Ratio in Special Classes	1.3:1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	20.2
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	1.2:1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>					
	N	R	KS1	KS2	Whole School
Term 1	84	89	95	N/A	93
Term 2	79	83	91	N/A	87
Term 3	79	97	93	N/A	95

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	24
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

## C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS 1 Results: 2001			Number of pupils in Y2: 28						
Percentage of pupils at each level									
			D	A	W	1	2	3	4
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	3	0	0	7	72	17	0
		National	0	0	4	13	62	21	0
EN: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	3	0	0	7	62	28	0
		National	0	0	4	13	54	29	0
	Task/Test	School	3	0	0	7	62	28	0
		National	1	0	3	13	53	30	0
EN: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	3	0	0	7	90	0	0
		National	0	0	5	13	70	12	0
	Task/Test	School	3	0	3	3	90	0	0
		National	0	1	5	10	75	9	0
EN: Speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	3	0	0	0	0	69	29
		National	0	0	3	11	63	23	0
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	0	69	28	0
		National	0	0	2	9	60	29	0
	Task/Test	School	0	0	0	0	69	28	0
		National	0	0	2	6	56	36	0
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	0	72	24	0
		National	0	0	2	10	67	21	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school:	90	In Wales:	81

- D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements  
A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence  
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

## D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

The inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors over a period of three days.

- Pre-inspection meetings were held with the head, staff and GB.
- Seven parents attended a meeting with two members of the inspection team.
- Twenty one questionnaire responses were analysed and summarised. 100% of responses were positive.
- All documentation submitted by the school was analysed and discussed, including the SDP, policy and curriculum documents and teachers' planning files.
- Pupils were observed as they arrived and departed from school and during the mid-day and other breaks.
- At various times during the day, inspectors took the opportunity to talk to pupils and to discuss their work.
- Thirty lessons or part-lessons were observed.

- Pupils were heard reading and were examined in their knowledge and understanding of all subjects.
- A wide range of pupils' written work and other work was examined in each class.
- Inspectors discussed pupils' work with class teachers and examined assessment records.
- Discussions were held with the head and staff.
- The work of pupils with SEN was examined.
- Minutes of meetings and documents relating to the financial management of the school were scrutinised and discussed.
- Budget figures were examined and discussed with the head.
- Attendance and pupils' records were inspected.
- Inspectors attended acts of collective worship.
- There were post inspection meetings with the acting head, staff and the GB.

### **E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team**

<b>Team Member</b>	<b>Subject Responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect Responsibilities</b>
Mr Peter Mathias	Early Years Mathematics Science Art Physical education Religious education	The school and its priorities Main findings Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum Teaching Self evaluation and planning for improvement Leadership and efficiency Staffing, accommodation and learning resources Key Issues for action
Mr Eilian James		Behaviour Attitudes Partnership with parents, community, school and other institutions Partnership with industry
Mrs Julie Jones	English Welsh as a second language Design and technology Information technology History Geography Music	Main findings Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Assessment recording and reporting Curriculum Support and guidance Special educational needs