

**Inspection under Section 10 of the
Schools Inspections Act 1996**

**Goetre Infants' School
Rowan Way
Gurnos
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 9PB**

School Number:2036/675

Date of Inspection: 14th – 16th March 2005

By

**Mr Eifion Morgan
WO 87/16248**

Date: 19th May 2005

Under Estyn contract number: T/155/04P

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Goetre Infants' School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents more information about their child's school. A copy of the summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

The inspection of Goetre Infants' School took place between 14th and 16th March 2005. An independent team of inspectors, led by Mr Eifion Morgan undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Grade 1 | good with outstanding features |
| Grade 2 | good features and no important shortcomings |
| Grade 3 | good features outweigh shortcomings |
| Grade 4 | some good features, but shortcomings in important areas |
| Grade 5 | many important shortcomings |

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who attain the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who attain the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|
| Year | R | Y1 | Y2 | Y3 | Y4 | Y5 | Y6 |
| Ages | 4-5 | 5-6 | 6-7 | 7-8 | 8-9 | 9-10 | 10-11 |

Secondary phase:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Year | Y7 | Y8 | Y9 | Y10 | Y11 | Y12 | Y13 |
| Ages | 11-12 | 12-13 | 13-14 | 14-15 | 15-16 | 16-17 | 17-18 |

The national curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

| | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Key stage 1 | Year 1 and Year 2 |
| Key stage 2 | Year 3 to Year 6 |
| Key stage 3 | Year 7 to Year 9 |
| Key stage 4 | Year 10 and Year 11 |

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Goetre Infants' school is located in Gurnos – a large housing estate to the north of Merthyr Tydfil town centre. The majority of pupils live in the locality but a few come from the nearby Galon Uchaf estate. When pupils are seven years old they transfer to the adjoining junior school.
2. There are currently 157 pupils on roll but numbers have fallen consistently over the last few years. This number includes 16 pupils in two Observation classes for moderate and specific learning difficulties – some of whom come from outside the immediate catchment area.
3. This is a community first area and an area of high unemployment. The school is actively involved in community initiatives such as, People in Communities Family project with the overall aim of breaking the cycle of deprivation. The school has substantial involvement with the Social Services. The area is economically disadvantaged and this is reflected in the high percentage of pupils (71%) registered as being entitled to receive free school meals. This is well above the national average.
4. A high percentage of children entering the school have very poorly developed personal, social and academic skills, as is reflected in the school's baseline assessment results. Virtually all the children have received pre-school education. The school has identified 82 pupils (54%) as having special educational needs. This is well above the national average. One pupil in the Observation classes has a statement of special educational needs, however, there are no pupils for whom the National Curriculum (NC) is disapplied. None of the pupils come from a home where Welsh is the predominant language.
5. The school aims to support and encourage each child to achieve his/her full potential and to become a responsible and caring member of the community.
6. These principles are reflected in the school's aims that are to:
 - provide the best possible education for children;
 - help children read, write, listen and speak effectively;
 - help children learn about mathematics, science and all aspects of technology;
 - help children care for and understand the world in which they live;
 - help children know that they live in Wales and to be proud of their Welsh heritage;
 - help children develop skills in the creative arts and to enjoy and appreciate different kinds of music and works of art;
 - give children opportunities to enjoy and learn skills of physical education;

- help children develop a respect for religious and moral values and an understanding and tolerance for the beliefs of others;
- help children learn that courtesy, good manners and consideration for others are very important;
- encourage and develop the philosophy of teamwork, all equal partners working together for the good of all members of the school community.

The school's priorities and targets

7. The school's priorities and targets for improvement include:
 - a continual emphasis on raising standards;
 - to refine and further develop its assessment procedures and the role of subject co-ordinators;
 - to review and evaluate the curriculum and in particular develop the new foundation phase;
 - to continue to develop community links;
 - to continue to improve SEN procedures;
 - to implement teachers' workload agreement.
8. The school was last inspected in April 1999. Since then, the school has made good progress in addressing the key issues for action and standards have continued to improve over recent years. Since the last inspection, the school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark for literacy and numeracy.

Summary

9. Goetre Infant School is a very good school with many outstanding features. It provides its pupils with a very good quality of education that broadens and extends their experiences and makes an outstanding contribution to their personal, social and academic development. The school is a supportive and caring environment where all pupils are valued and respected. Staff, including non-teaching staff, are highly committed to the progress and well-being of all pupils. The school has benefited from the outstanding leadership of the headteacher.
10. The school's self-evaluation report is based on the seven key questions identified by Estyn (see below for details). The school judged its work to be good with outstanding features (Grade 1) in two of these areas, namely, 'how well learners are cared for, guided and supported' and the 'efficiency with which the school used its resources'. The inspection team agreed with these judgements.

11. The inspection team judged that the school had underestimated its effectiveness in the five other areas, and that there were no important shortcomings in any of the areas, and outstanding features in four of them. In the judgement of the inspection team each of the grades should be raised to reflect this.
12. In summary, the inspection team judged the school's work as follows:

Table of grades awarded

| Key question | Inspection grade |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1 How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| 2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment? | 1 |
| 3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community? | 1 |
| 4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |
| 5 How effective are leadership and strategic management? | 1 |
| 6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards? | 1 |
| 7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources? | 1 |

Standards

13. Standards of achievement in the areas of learning and subjects inspected are as follows:

| Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 24% | 71% | 5% | | |

14. Standards of achievement in virtually all lessons and areas of learning are at least good with no important shortcomings (Grade 2), and good with outstanding features (Grade 1) in around a quarter of all lessons. This is well above the Welsh Assembly Government all-Wales target of 50% of lessons being Grade 2 or better. This reflects a significant improvement in standards since the last inspection.
15. Baseline assessments, school data and observations during the inspection indicate that children's attainment, on entry, is well below average. The overall quality of educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

16. The standards of achievement of children under five are as follows:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Language, literacy and communication | Grade 2 |
| Personal and social development | Grade 1 |
| Mathematical development | Grade 1 |
| Knowledge and understanding of the world | Grade 1 |
| Creative development | Grade 2 |
| Physical development | Grade 2 |

17. Children under five make very good progress in lessons from a low, and often very low, starting point, both in terms of their academic ability and personal development. The very high priority given to purposeful interaction between adults and children effectively promotes and develops good standards of listening and speaking and the more able children recognise some letter sounds. In adult-directed activities children make some progress in writing, but overall pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped. The majority of children understand and respond well to a good range of everyday commands in Welsh and pupils' oral bilingual skills are good.

18. Most children in reception count accurately to 10 and many count well beyond that number. Pupils' computer skills are progressing well and they have good manipulative skills, such as when controlling the computer mouse.

19. Standards of achievement in the five subjects inspected in key stage 1 are as follows:

| Subject | Key Stage 1 |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| English | Grade 2 |
| Mathematics | Grade 1 |
| Welsh | Grade 2 |
| Design & Technology | Grade 2 |
| Religious Education | Grade 2 |

20. Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2004 as judged by teacher assessment, in the National Curriculum core subjects of English, mathematics and science was below national and local (LEA) averages. They were below those of similar schools in Wales, based on the number of pupils entitled to receive free school meals. This is an invidious comparison, however, since the number of pupils at school who are entitled to receive free school meals is well above the highest number for which comparative data is available.

21. The results of the statutory assessments at the end of key stage 1, over the last few years, shows a continuing upward trend in English, mathematics and science. More than half the pupils (in 2004) achieved the expected levels (level 2) in the three core subjects (core subject indicator). This is despite an increasing number of pupils identified as requiring additional help with their language skills when they start school. Scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection and teacher assessment reflects pupils' higher achievement in

mathematics and in reading, where several pupils achieve level 3. Standards of pupils' writing, however, remain low.

22. All pupils in key stage 1, regardless of their background, and including those identified as having special educational needs, make very good progress in school. Pupils develop very good listening skills. Most pupils speak clearly and their vocabulary illustrates the very good progress they are making. Pupils' reading skills develop very well; pupils of all abilities are enthusiastic readers. The development of pupils' writing skills, however, has not kept pace with their progress in other aspects of language.
23. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good Welsh vocabulary. They understand words and commands used by their teacher and are eager to take part in classroom activities such as role-play. Pupils use simple words and phrases confidently and their pronunciation of Welsh words is good. Their writing in the language is however curtailed by their limited writing skills.
24. Pupils in key stage 1 have good numeracy skills and the more able pupils in both year 1 and year 2 show good basic mental ability. Most pupils use computers confidently to support their learning in classrooms.
25. The achievement of pupils in the Observation classes is good with outstanding features. The special educational needs of these pupils are extensive and wide-ranging, but all make very good progress and are fully integrated into the daily life of the school. The aim of returning as many pupils as possible to mainstream school provision is achieved.
26. Pupils' personal, social and learning educational skills are very well developed, and overall, the added value to children's learning is an outstanding feature of the school. All pupils take an active part in the life and work of the school and every pupil is an integral part of the school community. Pupils enjoy school life and they are well motivated, behave responsibly and show respect for others. By year 2 most pupils show commendable levels of self-discipline and decision-making skills, as was evident in their role-play activities of Victorian life. Pupils, in their small groups, working outside their classroom, developed their ideas through active involvement and discussion. This illustrates the growing maturity of these pupils and their capacity to work co-operatively. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils in the Observational classes are consistently good.
27. Pupils' understanding of equal opportunities is very well developed throughout the school and they all take part in school activities, including visits to the locality and further afield. Such visits substantially extend pupils' limited experiences and help them to get to know and understand their local culture and heritage, and that of Wales and are a significant factor in developing Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig. Pupils' respect for the diversity of beliefs, attitudes and cultural traditions within society and their understanding of such issues are developed through consideration of others including those less fortunate than themselves.

28. Attendance rates are satisfactory, averaging about 90% for the past three terms. Most pupils are punctual and keen to attend school. Registration is conducted efficiently and in accordance with statutory requirements.
29. The school functions very well as a supportive, happy and orderly community. Pupils enjoy coming to school and, in discussion, it was obvious that, to the vast majority of children, the school is a highly significant and major part of their lives. It is a point of reference where they know that they are cared for and respected as individuals. The school is a highly significant influence on the lives of these pupils and plays a significant part in raising their self-esteem and developing their feelings of self-worth.

The quality of education and training

30. The quality of teaching observed in the areas of learning and subjects inspected is as follows:

| Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 38% | 62% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

31. No lessons were seen where there were important shortcomings and an exceptional aspect of the teaching is the high proportion of lessons that were good with outstanding features (Grade 1). The quality of the teaching is well above the Welsh Assembly Government expectations and a substantial improvement since the last inspection.
32. An outstanding feature of all lessons is the excellent relationships between pupils and their teachers and support staff. This creates an outstandingly productive working environment that very successfully fosters learning. Other good and often outstanding features of the teaching include teachers' detailed lesson planning that incorporates opportunities to develop pupils' basic and key skills. Lessons are also well differentiated and teachers use questions very well to probe pupils' understanding, and this ensures that all pupils are actively involved. Classroom support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, notably in pupils' personal development. Teachers' planning ensures continuity and progression in pupils' learning.
33. Assessment procedures are good overall. Children's learning needs are assessed soon after they start school, and appropriate support is provided. Teachers are vigilant in marking pupils' work and this helps them to understand how they can improve. End-of-year targets are clearly identified for all pupils, however, pupils' achievements are not regularly assessed so that short-term targets can be set and pupils' progress tracked throughout the year.
34. The school recently developed key skills scheme of work is detailed and well used by teachers to inform their planning. However, the school does not have assessment procedures to ensure the progressive development of key and basic skills across the curriculum.

35. The provision for learners with SEN in mainstream classes is very good. These pupils are very well supported and play an active part in the life of the school. The school's support for the minority of pupils with challenging behaviour is very good.
36. The SEN needs of pupils in the Observation classes are very well assessed and their progress, including their behaviour, is routinely and very carefully tracked. Teachers and support staff work very efficiently as a team in providing continuity of support based on assessed needs. This is an exemplar of good practice.
37. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The headteacher, teaching and support staff are successful in creating a sensitive, supportive ethos built on care and respect for others.
38. 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. An air of reverence is established and maintained throughout morning worship and a strong sense of community is evident.
39. The aims of the school to encourage and promote positive values and attitudes are fully realised. The quality of relationships throughout the school is excellent and this contributes significantly to pupils' confidence, self-esteem and very good behaviour. The headteacher, teaching and support staff provide exemplary role models for pupils in their care and they ensure pupils have a good understanding of right from wrong.
40. Pupils relate very well to each other, consistently offering mutual help and support in work and play. The youngest children have settled quickly into their new environment and co-operate well with each other and with adults. Pupils of all ages willingly accept responsibilities; they carry out their duties sensibly and cheerfully and take delight in helping their teachers.
41. This is an inclusive school that actively and successfully promotes equality of opportunity for all and is free of any race or gender discrimination. It provides a broad and balanced holistic curriculum very well enriched by visits to the locality and further afield. These visits are highlights in pupils' education and make an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning experiences and their knowledge and understanding of their locality and of the heritage and culture of Wales.
42. The headteacher and staff place a high priority on pastoral provision throughout the school and provide outstanding care, guidance and support for all pupils. The school has an appropriate policy and procedures to deal with child protection issues, and all adults in the school are aware of the correct procedures to be followed.
43. The school enjoys very good relationships with parents. In the pre-inspection meeting and the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents reported a very high level of satisfaction with the school and an appreciation of the contribution of

the school to their children's personal and academic development. The support parents give children at home is variable, at best, it makes a significant difference to pupils' learning.

44. The school recognises the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and ensures that all pupils are valued and treated with respect and dignity. There are effective measures in place to eliminate all forms of oppressive behaviour, including racial discrimination, bullying and all other forms of harassment. None was seen during the inspection.

Leadership and management

45. The headteacher's leadership is good with outstanding features. She has been the driving force in taking the school forward and her influence pervades all aspects of school life, creating a vibrant and warm learning environment for all children. She gives the school a clear sense of direction and is very well supported by the assistant head and all staff, including non-teaching staff. The headteacher is held in the highest regard by her colleagues and her outstanding contribution has been recognised nationally.
46. Central to the school's aims and values is its commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all, whatever the pupils' background and educational needs. This is reflected in all aspects of school life.
47. The school has responded very well to national and local priorities. The work of the school is recognised by such awards as the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Investors in People award. At a local level, the school works with parents to improve pupils' achievements, and the school is regarded by the LEA as an exemplar of good practice.
48. Staff appraisal is an integral part of the school's management procedures and is highly effective in raising standards. The school has also benefited from a very stable, dedicated staff whose professionalism and commitment enables them to deal with challenges admirably, whilst offering pupils a very stimulating range of learning experiences, and fully supporting their personal development.
49. The governing body meets its legal requirements. Governors are fully supportive of the school and proud of its achievements. They are kept well informed of school developments by the headteacher at regular meetings. Governors are involved in the school's strategic planning and have been actively involved in producing the school's self-evaluation report. This now provides further opportunities for them to be involved in its implementation. Finances are very well managed and the school operates principles of best value for money.
50. The school's self-evaluation report is good with outstanding features. The information was first hand, and supported by appropriate evidence. It identifies the school's many strengths, and an outstanding feature of the report is its clarity and identification of areas for development. Another outstanding feature of the school's self-evaluation is the monitoring of the teaching and learning.

The headteacher, as part of her monitoring role, has set clear lesson guidelines and her perceptive comments and teachers' self-critical approach, has resulted in the current good and very good teaching.

51. The school staff are suitably qualified and experienced. All make an outstanding contribution to ensuring the wellbeing of pupils and to the smooth running of the school. Resources are used efficiently and the school accommodation is kept in good condition and is an attractive environment for pupils' learning. The school manages its resources very well and provides very good value for money. The school has made good very progress since the last inspection in addressing all the issues identified in the previous report.

Recommendations

52. In order to improve further, the school needs to:-

R1* refine its current assessment procedures so as to assess pupils' achievements at regular intervals during the year and to use the results to:

- (i) track pupils' short term progress;
- (ii) Inform teachers' planning;
- (iii) make learners aware of their learning objectives so that they can evaluate their own work.

R2 develop assessment procedures to ensure the progressive development of pupils' key and basic skills;

R3* improve pupils' writing skills.

* This is recognised by the school as an area for development.

53. The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Standards

Key question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

54. The findings of the inspection team differ from the school's self-evaluation. The school judged this key question as Grade 3, but the inspection team judged there to be good features and no important shortcomings.

55. Standards of achievement in the areas of learning and subjects inspected are as follows:

| Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 24% | 71% | 5% | - | - |

56. Standards of achievement, in virtually all lessons and areas of learning, are at least good with no important shortcomings, (Grade 2), and good with outstanding features (Grade 1) in about a quarter of all lessons. This is well above the Welsh Assembly Government all-Wales target of 50% of lessons being Grade 2 or better. This reflects a significant improvement in standards since the last inspection.

57. Baseline assessments, school data and observations during the inspection indicate that children's attainment, on entry, is well below average. The overall quality of educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

58. The standards of achievement of children under five are as follows:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Language, literacy and communication | Grade 2 |
| Personal and social development | Grade 1 |
| Mathematical development | Grade 1 |
| Knowledge and understanding of the world | Grade 1 |
| Creative development | Grade 2 |
| Physical development | Grade 2 |

59. Children, under five, make very good progress in lessons from a low, and often very low, starting point, both in terms of their academic ability and personal development. The very high priority given to purposeful interaction between adults and children effectively promotes and develops good standards of listening and speaking.

60. Children, in reception, enjoy listening to stories and sharing language games and rhymes. They can point to the title of stories and know terms such as, author and illustrator. Most children have a good recall of stories they have heard, and the more able recognise some letter sounds. In adult directed

activities, pupils hold pencils and crayons appropriately making recognisable marks, and they make some progress in copying and underwriting adults writing but, overall, pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped. The Welsh language is successfully introduced and the majority of children understand and respond to a good range of everyday commands in Welsh. Number rhymes and counting in Welsh are well used to promote learning and overall, pupils' bilingual achievement is good.

61. Most children in reception count accurately to 10 and many count well beyond that number. They recognise written numbers and name some common two-dimensional shapes, such as squares and circles. Pupils' computer skills are progressing well and they have good manipulative skills such as, when controlling the computer mouse. Children's personal and social skills are developing very well and all pupils have a very good attitude to learning. Children co-operate well and work harmoniously together in pairs and small groups. They are learning to make decisions, such as during play activities, and this successfully raises their self-esteem. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
62. Standards of achievement in the five subjects inspected in key stage 1 are as follows:

| Subject | Key Stage 1 |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| English | Grade 2 |
| Mathematics | Grade 1 |
| Welsh | Grade 2 |
| Design & Technology | Grade 2 |
| Religious Education | Grade 2 |

63. Pupils' attainment, at the end of key stage 1, in 2004 as judged by teacher assessment, in the National Curriculum core subjects of English, mathematics and science was below national and local (LEA) averages. They were below those of similar schools in Wales, based on the number of pupils entitled to receive free school meals. This is an invidious comparison however, since the percentage of pupils at school who are entitled to receive free school meals is well above the highest number for which comparative data is available.
64. The results of the statutory assessments at the end of key stage 1, over the last few years, shows a continuing upward trend in English, mathematics and science. More than half the pupils (in 2004) achieved the expected levels (level 2) in the three core subjects (core subject indicator). This is despite an increasing number of pupils identified as requiring additional help with their language skills when they start school. Scrutiny of pupils' work and teacher assessment reflects pupils' higher achievement in mathematics and in reading, where several pupils achieve level 3. Standards of pupils' writing, however, remain low.
65. All pupils in key stage 1, including those identified as having special educational needs, make very good progress in acquiring key skills. Pupils develop, and by the end of year 2, have very good listening skills and virtually all pupils listen

attentively to their teachers. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and pupils respond positively to teachers' calm and consistent approach. Most pupils speak clearly and their vocabulary illustrates the very good progress they are making. Pupils' reading skills develop very well; pupils of all abilities are enthusiastic readers and the majority of pupils read fluently and with understanding. At best, pupils have a very good understanding of stories they have read and are beginning to understand some of the hidden meanings in such stories. The development of pupils' writing skills, however, has not kept pace with their progress in other aspects of language. Handwriting is often inconsistent and inaccurate.

66. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good Welsh vocabulary. They understand words and commands used by their teacher and recognise Welsh words and phrases displayed around the school and in classrooms. More able pupils read simple sentences with commendable pronunciation. Most pupils are eager to take part in class activities such as role-play, and use simple words and phrases confidently. Their writing in the language is, however, curtailed by their limited writing skills. Pupils' oral bilingual skills are good. Everyday Welsh is being used increasingly and by the end of year 2 it has become a natural part of many classroom activities.
67. Pupils in key stage 1 have good numeracy skills and more able pupils in both year 1 and year 2 show very good mental ability. This is an outstanding feature of pupils' mathematical development. Year 2 pupils have a good understanding of mathematical terms such as adding and taking away when using money. These pupils name two and three dimensional shapes and group them according to their properties, such as the number of sides and corners. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they are using their developing numeracy skills across the curriculum. In science they measure the changing length of shadows during the day and construct graphs to show class birthdays. More able pupils deduced correctly that more pupils had October birthdays than any other month. Most pupils use computers confidently and competently to support their learning in classrooms. By the end of year 2, pupils have good investigative and problem solving skills, which was well illustrated in their investigation of how high balls bounce off different surfaces. Pupils show well-developed creative skills and give keen attention to detail, as was apparent in pupils' depiction of "stormy landscapes in the twilight". In such instances pupils mix paint imaginatively and their brush strokes illustrate trees in a storm very well.
68. All pupils, regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN), make very good progress and attain the agreed learning targets. This is facilitated by early identification of their needs and purposeful, well-directed support, such as the literacy enhancement programmes and multi-sensory teaching which makes a significant impact on pupils' achievement.
69. The achievement of pupils in the Observation classes is good with outstanding features. The special educational needs of these pupils are extensive and wide-ranging, but all make very good progress and are fully integrated into the

daily life of the school. The aim of returning as many pupils as possible to mainstream school provision is achieved.

70. Pupils in year 2 have a good understanding of what they had learnt and, in discussion, the more able pupils suggested how they might improve. Teachers' comments and the good and critical marking of their work, help pupils to improve and, overall, they are well prepared for the next stage of learning.
71. Pupils' personal, social and learning educational skills are very well developed and overall, the added value to children's learning is an outstanding feature of the school. All pupils take an active part in the life and work of the school and all are an integral part of the school community. Pupils enjoy school life and are very interested in their work, they are well motivated, behave responsibly and show respect for others. By year 2, most pupils show commendable levels of self-discipline and decision-making skills, as was evident in their role-play activities of Victorian life. Pupils, working outside their classroom, developed their ideas through active involvement and discussion. This illustrates the growing maturity of these pupils and their capacity to work in small groups. More able pupils are developing the capacity to work independently. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils in the Observation classes are consistently good.
72. Attendance rates are satisfactory, averaging about 90% for the past three terms. Most pupils are punctual and keen to attend school. Registration is conducted efficiently and in accordance with statutory requirements. The school complies with all attendance requirements set out in the National Assembly for Wales Circular 3/99, *Pupil Support and Social Inclusion*.
73. The school is rightly concerned about the number of parents who take their children on holiday during term time. This has an adverse impact on the continuity of pupils' formal education and on overall rates of attendance for the school. The school is working very hard to reach its target of 92.5% attendance rate and the high priority given to attendance and punctuality is frequently made known to parents.
74. Pupils' understanding of equal opportunities is very well developed throughout the school and all pupils take part in school activities, including extra-curricular visits to the locality and further afield. Such visits substantially extend pupils' limited experiences and help them to get to know and understand their local culture and heritage, and that of Wales. Pupils' respect for the diversity of beliefs, attitudes, and cultural traditions within society and their understanding of such issues are very well developed through consideration of others and those less fortunate than themselves.
75. The school functions very well as a supportive, happy and orderly community. In discussion, it was obvious that, to the vast majority of children, the school is a major part of their lives. It is a point of reference where they know that they are cared for and respected as individuals. The school is a highly significant influence on the lives of these pupils and plays a critical part in raising pupils' self-esteem and in developing their feelings of self-worth.

The quality of education and training

Key question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

76. The findings of the inspection team differ from the school's self-evaluation. The school judged this key question as Grade 2, but the inspection team judged there to be outstanding features in pupils' achievement.
77. The quality of teaching observed in the areas of learning and subjects inspected is as follows:

| Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 38% | 62% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

78. No lessons were seen where there were important shortcomings and an exceptional aspect of the teaching is the high proportion of lessons that were good with outstanding features (Grade 1). The quality of the teaching is well above the Welsh Assembly Government expectations and a substantial improvement since the last inspection.
79. An outstanding feature of all lessons is the excellent relationships between pupils and their teachers and support staff. This creates an outstandingly productive working environment where pupils are suitably challenged and that very successfully fosters learning. Other good and outstanding features of the teaching include teachers' detailed lesson planning that incorporates opportunities to develop pupils' basic and key skills. Lessons are also well differentiated to meet the learning needs of all pupils and to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. Teachers use questions very well to probe pupils' understanding, and this ensures that all pupils are actively involved in lessons. Classroom support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, notably in pupils' personal development. Teachers' planning is generally very good and lessons build on pupils' previously acquired knowledge and understanding of subjects. Lessons incorporate opportunities to develop pupils' basic and key skills, although the progressive development of these skills is less well established. Overall, teachers' planning is based on their familiarity with recent developments in education. Teachers use Welsh naturally in lessons as a means of communication and this effectively brings the language alive and has a positive impact on developing pupils' bilingual skills. The Cwricwlwm Cymreig is very well integrated across the curriculum and is fully incorporated in teachers' planning.
80. Procedures for assessment, recording and reporting pupils' achievement are good overall. They are very good for pupils in the Observational classes. Children's learning needs are assessed soon after they start school and

appropriate support is provided. Pupils identified with learning difficulties are well supported in all classes. The school has modified its assessment procedures to accommodate pupils of low ability, so as to enable their progress to be tracked. Teachers are vigilant in marking pupils' work and this helps them to understand how they can improve. The marking often highlights pupils' poor writing skills and the school is well aware that this is an area that needs to be developed. Overall, there are no important shortcomings in the school's established methods of assessment, but there is a need to further refine its procedures. End of year targets are clearly identified for all pupils, however, pupils' achievements are not regularly assessed so that short-term targets can be set and pupils' progress tracked throughout the year. The school's recently developed key skills scheme of work is detailed and well used by teachers to inform their planning, however, there is no system in place to ensure that pupils' key and basic skills are developed progressively.

81. The early assessment of pupils, ensures that those with SEN are identified at an early stage and receive purposeful and well-directed support, such as the literacy enhancement programme. The SEN needs of pupils in the Observation classes are very well assessed and their progress, including their behaviour, is routinely and very carefully tracked. Teachers and support staff work very efficiently as a team providing continuity of support based on assessed needs. Targets in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are very well focused on pupils' perceived needs, and regularly reviewed. This is an exemplar of good practice.
82. Reports to parents are informative and highlight what pupils can do and the next stage of learning. Statutory requirements for assessing and reporting are met.

Key question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

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| Grade 1: Good with outstanding features |
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83. The findings of the inspection team differ from the school's self-evaluation. The school judged this key question as Grade 2, but the inspection team judged there to be outstanding features in the learning experiences that the school provides.
84. The school responds very well to pupils' learning needs and interests and provides all pupils with equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum is stimulating and enriched by extra-curricular experiences such as visits to the locality and further afield. There is very good continuity and progression in pupils' knowledge and understanding and good cross-curricular links are evident, as for the inclusion of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. It meets statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the agreed syllabus for religious education.
85. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's learning. The curriculum for these children has many outstanding features and learning experiences lead naturally into the NC programmes of study in key stage 1. The focus on first-hand experiences develops their 'speaking and listening' skills and enriches their language development.
86. There is very good provision for pupils' personal and social education. This is given high priority in the school and makes a highly significant impact on children's development. Pupils with challenging behaviour, and those in vulnerable circumstances, are positively managed and well supported, and gifted and talented pupils are given opportunities to extend their learning. Pupils' very good personal and social skills are evident throughout key stage 1 and this makes a substantial contribution to the school's very good ethos.
87. The support for all pupils' with special educational needs (SEN) is very good both in mainstream and observation classes. Pupils in the Observation classes have access to a relevant learning and behavioural curriculum, which is suitably differentiated and modified to meet individual needs. It meets statutory and includes the recommended, minimum curricular requirements. The curriculum for these classes is of outstanding quality.
88. Curriculum planning across the school builds systematically on existing knowledge, understanding and skills. The topic-approach used by the school is very effective and the planning provides a clear structure and incorporates good progression in pupils' learning. The Basic Skills Quality Mark has been attained

and awarded to the school on three successive occasions indicating, sustained level of progress in Literacy and Numeracy.

89. The school's provision for the equality of access and opportunity for all learners is very good. An outstanding comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities extends and compliments the curriculum. These experiences enrich pupils' language development and contribute significantly to the standards they achieve, particularly enhancing their personal and social development. Very good use is made of specialist off-site provision, which extends the physical and sensory development of the pupils in the Observation classes. Gender differences and social disadvantages are not an issue and all pupils have the opportunity to achieve high standards in all areas of the school's life.
90. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with outstanding features. The headteacher, teaching and support staff are successful in creating a sensitive, supportive ethos built on care and respect for each other. 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. An air of reverence is established and maintained throughout morning worship and a strong sense of community is evident.
91. The aim of the school to encourage and promote positive values and attitudes is fully realised in practice. The quality of relationships throughout the school is excellent and this contributes significantly to pupils' confidence, self-esteem and very good behaviour. The headteacher, teaching and support staff provide exemplary role models for pupils in their care and they ensure pupils have a good understanding of right from wrong.
92. Pupils relate very well to each other, consistently offering mutual help and support in work and play. The youngest children have settled quickly into their new environment and co-operate well with each other and with adults. Pupils, of all ages, willingly accept responsibilities; they carry out their duties sensibly and cheerfully and take delight in helping their teachers.
93. The school has a very strong Welsh ethos. The *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is carefully integrated into subject areas and visits to places of interest make an outstanding contribution to pupils' awareness of the culture and heritage of Wales. The school's promotion of bilingualism is good. All teachers use Welsh as part of their every day language, and pupils show an increasing competency in the language. The school is highly successful in celebrating cultural diversity, and pupils have many opportunities to learn about the social and cultural traditions of other faiths and cultures. The school has a racial policy and action plan that teachers implement with conviction.
94. The school's partnerships with parents, the local community, other schools and higher education institutions are good with outstanding features that enrich the life and work of the school and enhance pupils' learning experiences.

95. Parents are very supportive and proud of the school. They appreciate its welcoming nature and value the ready access they have to the headteacher and staff through the school's 'open door' policy. Parents are very pleased with the quality of education their children receive within a caring, supportive environment. The support parents give children at home is variable, at best, it makes a significant difference to pupils' learning.
96. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. Parents are kept well informed through regular newsletters, curriculum topic information, an informative annual report of the governing body, a comprehensive prospectus and by regular meetings with teachers to discuss children's work and progress. These meetings are very well supported by parents. A useful home/school agreement is in place, which has been readily accepted by parents.
97. The school enjoys a close and effective partnership with the adjacent junior school to which pupils transfer. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils are good and ensure that year 2 pupils look forward to junior school with confidence. Regular liaison meetings, teacher exchanges between schools and a sharing of ideas and policies help secure continuity of education between the infant and junior schools.
98. The school has established successful partnerships with several institutes of higher and further education and provides training facilities for student teachers and students undertaking childcare and vocational 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.
99. The school is at the heart of the local community and works in partnership with a wide range of agencies to support children, parents and the community. Very good use is made of the community and locality as a learning resource. Educational visits and the expertise of members of the community make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and standards of achievement.
100. The school is successful in raising pupils' awareness of the world of work, and the vocational aspect of the personal and social education (PSE) programme is well addressed by teachers. Through their visits to a variety of retail, commercial and industrial sites, pupils are gaining first-hand knowledge of different working environments and an understanding of the variety of work undertaken in their locality and further afield.
101. Local employers are supportive of the school and several teachers have undertaken relevant industrial placements, which have contributed to their professional development and enhanced curriculum provision for pupils.
102. In discussion, a group of year 2 pupils showed a good understanding of the effects of human activities on the environment and how improvements can be made through strategies such as the recycling of waste material. Environmental

awareness and the benefits of re-cycling paper are effectively practised in school.

103. Pupils take part in competitions and workshops sponsored by industry and relevant agencies, including the Education Business Partnership (EBP) and Careers Wales. They exhibit their entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills as they take part in enterprise activities and have won recognition for their efforts in the Primary Innovation Award scheme.

Key question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

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| Grade1: Good with outstanding features |
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104. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in the self-evaluation report.
105. The headteacher and staff place a high priority on pastoral care throughout the school. Staff know their pupils very well and effectively monitor and support their educational progress, their social development and their personal welfare. The school liaises closely with the LEA and works in partnership with a range of relevant support agencies, including social services.
106. All adults in the school provide very good support for children when they enter school for the first time, and children settle quickly and confidently into their new school environment. Effective induction procedures ensure pupils are well supported when moving up classes and when transferring to the junior school.
107. Pupils work and play in a happy, supportive environment where they are secure and valued by staff. They readily turn to adults for help and support and are listened to and treated with respect. The quality of relationships throughout the school is excellent and this contributes significantly to pupils' self-esteem and confidence. This is an outstanding feature of the school. Pupils have access to a highly effective personal and social education (PSE) programme, in line with the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment authority for Wales (ACCAC) recommendations, which contributes significantly to the quality of support and guidance offered to pupils. Circle time, in particular, is having a positive impact on pupils' emotional, personal and social development.
108. The headteacher monitors attendance, punctuality and behaviour very carefully. The school's policies and procedures to promote good behaviour are very effective. Pupils whose behaviour is giving cause for concern are counselled, parents are involved and support is sought from external agencies and the LEA when necessary. These arrangements work very well. The school works in close partnership with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to monitor attendance and punctuality. Very effective procedures are in place to encourage good attendance and punctuality, to ensure pupils' absence is adequately explained and to follow up situations where necessary. The school makes good use of an efficient computerised registration system, which provides staff with comprehensive information about attendance and enables the school to identify patterns of absence for individual pupils.
109. The school has a detailed policy and set of procedures to promote health and safety, including risk assessment, which are monitored and implemented consistently by the headteacher, staff and the governing body. The school is successful in encouraging pupils to recognise the benefits of a healthy diet and lifestyle and even the youngest pupils recognise that fruit and vegetables are

beneficial to good health. It is involved in the first phase of the 'Healthy Schools Initiative'.

110. The headteacher, staff and governors work in pupils' best interests to safeguard their welfare and ensure they are adequately protected. The school has an appropriate policy and procedures to deal with child protection issues. The headteacher has designated responsibility for child protection and ensures that all adults in the school are aware of the correct procedures to be followed.
111. The provision for learners with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream classes is very good. Early identification of pupils with SEN is good, ensuring purposeful support. The school's policy is comprehensive and complies with the Code of Practice and the framework for inclusive education. The provision for support in mainstream classes is organised very well by the assistant special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo). She liaises effectively with the support staff and the governor with responsibility for SEN. Good, additional support helps meet the needs of groups of pupils who require literacy enhancement programmes and multi-sensory teaching. All pupils with SEN in mainstream, make very good progress.
112. The provision for learners with additional needs in the Observation classes is good with outstanding features. The special educational needs of pupils are extensive and wide-ranging, including developmental delay, speech and language disorder and pupils with challenging behaviour, such as autistic spectrum disorder. Many display compounded needs, displayed as a host of other difficulties. Pupils are screened appropriately before being placed at the unit. Outstanding care and support is given by the staff of the school, whilst pupils are in this specialist provision. The classes are seen as an integral part of the school and pupils are fully integrated into daily life. The main aim is to return as many pupils as possible to mainstream provision and, through the expertise and consistency of approach of the skilled staff, this is achieved. Annual reviews meet statutory requirements.
113. Teachers and support staff in the Observation classes are a very good team, providing continuity of support and assessment of need. Targets in individual educational programmes (IEPs) are stated in observable, measurable terms and are monitored and reviewed appropriately. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is sufficiently diagnostic. Parents are fully consulted regarding their child's SEN status; they can speak to the class teacher or SENCo regarding their child's progress at any time. However, some outside agency support is inconsistent for some pupils with additional needs.
114. The school's support for the minority of pupils with profound and challenging behaviour is good. The school has agreed and successfully implemented an appropriate positive behaviour management policy. Staff are successful in implementing a range of strategies to secure positive behaviour from pupils. The school successfully prepares pastoral support programmes for pupils who are at risk. No pupil was excluded in the past twelve months.

115. The school recognises the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and ensures all pupils are equally valued and are treated with respect and dignity. The school's equal opportunities policy is very successfully implemented and all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and all other facilities in the school. The school successfully challenges stereotypes and promotes gender equality, especially during role-play. Good race relations are promoted successfully and the school values and celebrates diversity.

116. There are effective measures in place to eliminate oppressive behaviour including racial discrimination, bullying and all other forms of harassment. Such incidents are virtually unknown and the school functions well as a harmonious community where all pupils, including those with disabilities and specific learning needs are valued equally.

Leadership and management

Key question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

117. The findings of the inspection team differ from the school's self-evaluation. The school judged this key question as Grade 2, but the inspection team judged there to be outstanding features in the way the school is being, and has been, led and managed since the last inspection.
118. The headteacher provides the school with leadership that is good with outstanding features. She has been the driving force in taking the school forward and her influence pervades all aspects of school life, creating a vibrant and warm learning environment for all children. She gives the school a clear sense of direction. Values, aims, objectives and targets are shared by all staff, including non-teaching staff.
119. The headteacher's professional expertise and her holistic approach to the education of pupils, is held in the highest regard by her colleagues and officers of the LEA. Her outstanding contribution has been recognised nationally.
120. Central to the school's aims and values is its commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all, whatever the pupils' background and educational needs. This principle is clearly reflected in all aspects of school life and successfully promotes pupils' self-esteem. An outstanding feature of the school is the way pupils mature as they come to appreciate that they are valued as individuals, and this is very well reflected in their feelings of self-worth.
121. The school has responded very well to national priorities. It has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark three times, the Investors in People award, which was recently reviewed and subsequently achieved earlier this year, and the first phase of the Healthy Schools Initiative. The school has successfully achieved the Welsh Heritage initiative consecutively over the last seven years and more recently has bid successfully for grants from the GTC (Wales), such as to develop key skills across the curriculum.
122. At a local level, the school participates in LEA initiatives such as, to improve pupils' reading skills (PAL) and to provide opportunities for parents to improve their own skills. The success of this initiative is apparent in pupils' very good reading achievement. The benefits of the initiatives were disseminated widely through the authority's Core Programme of in-service training and development. The school is highly regarded and an exemplar of good practice.
123. Whilst pupils' standards on entry are very low, the school has continued to set challenging targets, both in terms of academic and personal development. Pupils' academic standards of attainment have continued to improve since the

last inspection. Many pupils only receive minimal support outside the school and their current good and very good standards of achievement, is testimony to the effectiveness of the school in diagnosing pupils' needs and supporting them. This has been very effective in, for example, improving reading skills. The school is in no way complacent and has identified pupils' writing as its next focus for development in the School Development Plan. This illustrates very well the school's drive to achieve higher standards, despite the substantial and unfortunately, the substantial barriers to pupils' learning.

124. Overall, the school is outstandingly successful in developing pupils' personal development and responds very well to the many challenges posed by pupils. The school has been involved in piloting local initiatives, such as that for tracking the progress of pupils with SEN, and in disseminating effective practice in behaviour management, self-evaluation and target setting. The assistant headteacher has been involved in the dissemination of good practice in the role of the SENCo and in developing the 'inclusive' school. Such contributions have been recognised as good practice Nationally, such as by ACCAC.
125. Staff appraisal is an integral part of the school's management procedures. Very effective procedures are in place to identify individual and whole-school training and development needs. Pupils have also benefited from a very low rate of staff turnover, and the school benefits greatly from a highly dedicated staff.
126. Procedures for performance management and teacher appraisal are in line with national requirements. Overall, staff appraisal, including the appraisal of support staff, is highly effective and has resulted in improved standards of achievement.
127. The school meets its many challenges positively and sets challenging but realistic targets for both staff and pupils. An outstanding feature is the camaraderie evident amongst all staff who work tirelessly for the well-being of the pupils. The dedicated professionalism of the staff enables them to deal with issues and challenges admirably, whilst offering its pupils a stimulating range of learning experiences.
128. The governing body fully meets its regulatory and legal requirements. Governors are fully supportive of the school and proud of its achievements. They are kept well informed of school developments by the headteacher at regular meetings. Governors are well aware of the high quality of education provided by the school and its contribution to the local community and the lives of these pupils. Governors are involved in the school's strategic planning and are fully aware of the school's self-evaluation report. They have to evaluate and contribute to the report and this now provides further opportunities for them to be involved in overseeing its implementation. The governors also oversee the school's financial procedures. Finances are very well managed and the school operates principles of best value for money.

Key question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

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| Grade 1: Good with outstanding features |
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129. The findings of the inspection team differ from the school's self-evaluation. The school judged this key question to be Grade 2, but the inspection team judged there to be many outstanding features in the way leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards.
130. The self-evaluation information provided for inspectors was outstanding. The information was objective and supported by an appropriate evidence base. The headteacher, who was the nominee, made a significant and valuable contribution to the inspection process.
131. The school displays a positive, self-critical culture and the headteacher and staff, including non-teaching staff, have worked hard to improve the quality of the school's provision. Governors are kept informed about the performance of the school and any issues of concern through regular reports from the headteacher.
132. Curriculum leaders are well informed about standards in their area of responsibility and the results are well used to inform planning. An outstanding feature of the school is the monitoring, evaluation and tracking of pupils in the Observation (pupil referral) Unit and this is recognised by the LEA by involving the SENCo in the "Key Strategic SENCo Forum".
133. Curriculum leaders are becoming more active in monitoring and evaluating standards in their subjects and in using this information. Portfolios of pupils' work illustrate progress and achievement very well, but the work is not consistently levelled against NC criteria. End of year targets are set for individual pupils, but pupils' progress is not assessed sufficiently often and short-term targets are not identified so as to enable short-term progress to be tracked. However, pupils' progress from year to year is very closely monitored and areas for improvement identified. This is having a very positive impact on standards.
134. The teaching is very well supported by clear schemes of work. The school has a good key skills scheme of work and teachers' planning incorporates appropriate opportunities for pupils to use and develop their basic and key skills. However, there is no formal system of assessment in place to ensure the progressive development of key and basic skills. The quality of teaching is very effectively monitored and is another outstanding feature of the school. The headteacher has established clear guidelines and effective teaching strategies, and her perceptive comments and teachers' self-critical approach have resulted in an appreciable improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

135. The school's self-evaluation process is well established and takes in the views of all with an interest in the school. Parents, in their comments and pre-inspection questionnaire, expressed complete satisfaction with the school and an appreciation of the contribution it makes to their children's education. The school, in turn, makes every effort to inform and involve parents.
136. The self-evaluation report is of very good quality and is the result of a very good and meticulous self-evaluation process. It identifies the school's many strengths, and a notable feature of the report is its clarity and the identification of areas for improvement.
137. The inspection team agreed with the school's overall judgement of its provision as being good, but the inspection team recognised the many outstanding features in all aspects of its work and in particular the very good progress made since the last inspection.

Key question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

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| Grade 1: Good with outstanding features |
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138. The findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
139. There are sufficient numbers of well-qualified teachers who possess a good range of specialist skills to provide for the needs of pupils, including those with SEN and the under-fives. They successfully provide a secure, happy and industrious environment for pupils. Learning support assistants and those with nursery nurse qualifications, give pupils very good support. However, the limited additional support in the Early Years detracts from the quality of education provided for these children, particularly in their language, personal and social education and physical development.
140. Ancillary staff, including the school secretary, mid-day supervisors, canteen staff and cleaners, make a valuable contribution to the smooth running and overall quality of life in the school. The headteacher ensures that all teaching, support and ancillary staff are valued and respected for the contribution they make to the school. A very good team spirit is evident.
141. The accommodation is spacious for the number of pupils on roll and is clean and well maintained. The headteacher and staff make very good use of all available space to provide pupils with a vibrant and stimulating learning environment. The quality of display is excellent and is used successfully to celebrate pupils achievements and as a tool for learning.
142. The overall quality and expertise of teaching staff are outstanding and this clearly has an impact on the quality of standards achieved. Throughout the school, pupils are given very good support by well-qualified and effectively deployed, experienced ancillary staff. In the Observation classes, staff provide very good support for pupils with SEN as well as for other pupils who need extra challenges in their work or support in their behaviour. The school is supported by two support teachers, funded by the LEA, for groups of pupils with additional learning needs in regular language sessions.
143. The provision and quality of learning resources throughout the school are very good and appropriate to pupils' age and needs.
144. The outstandingly rich learning environment provided by the school is enhanced by a wealth of resources that are put to effective use in the support of teaching and learning. Resources are organised in every available space, so that all pupils have first-hand experiences in all curricular areas, throughout the day. This is an outstanding feature of the school. Curriculum leaders effectively audit and review resources, regularly. The school has good access arrangements for

disabled persons with an audit of need currently being organised. The stairs that lead from the hall to the lower block of classrooms has no ramp.

145. The management, training and deployment of teaching and support staff both in mainstream and in the Observation classes are very good. Support assistants who have designated responsibilities either with groups of pupils or the general school, work efficiently with teachers and support all pupils very well. Teachers and ancillary staff undertake appropriate and a significant amount of training to support their professional development, with the programme being managed effectively. This expertise is disseminated to all members of staff within the school and often delivered to other professionals in a wide variety of formats, within the LEA and the wider community.
146. The monitoring and evaluation of the spending, developed by the school, are very good. This is an outstanding feature, and the staff of the school are developing and sharing this protocol with the LEA. The link between the range of courses and activities undertaken contributes very well to realising the priorities identified in the school development plan and ultimately benefits all, including pupils in the specialist SEN provision. Performance management, including policy and procedures, are very well established with consistent, specific, monitoring undertaken by the headteacher.
147. The school administrator undertakes finance and administration tasks and manages the daily routine and a range of other responsibilities, effectively and efficiently. The school manages its resources appropriately and ensures very good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Under 5s

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

Language, literacy and communication skills

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

149. The very high priority given to continuous, purposeful interaction between adults and children effectively promotes and develops good standards in speaking and listening. Children express opinions confidently in whole-class and in small group sessions. They answer and ask questions clearly, having good opportunities to express their thoughts and to explore meaning.
150. Children listen well to stories, sharing language games and rhymes. For example; they recall Woolly Wendy's visit to the highest mountain and remember the contents of her rucksack accurately. During outstanding role-play activities they recall very well detailed information on visits, books and events; for example, when Whizzy Wizard sends them another letter, children become highly motivated, extend their language development and improve key skills, ultimately raising their standard of achievement.
151. Very good opportunities are available for children to write using different pens, pencils, crayons and paints. Children write and make marks during adult-directed activities, successfully developing accuracy and formation to a satisfactory level. They know the difference between a speech and thought bubble. Children have a good awareness that written symbols have sound and meaning and a few write their names. Some children successfully progress to copying over or under adults' writing. A few children are emerging as independent writers, but overall children's writing skills are underdeveloped.
152. All children enjoy sharing books and listen well to stories. They can point to the title and discuss the picture content. They are becoming familiar with terms such as author and illustrator. Most children can sequence events well and all are confident at retelling a story. A few children make good progress in word recognition before being placed on their first reading book. A few children make good progress in their recognition of letter sounds and can discriminate and identify sounds at the beginning of children's names. The majority of children confidently tap out the syllables during a music session.

153. Welsh is successfully introduced to children with the majority understanding and translating a range of everyday commands. Number rhymes and counting in Welsh consistently, increases standards of achievement. Children's response to Welsh instructions is very good.

Shortcomings

154. There are no major shortcomings.

Personal and social development

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Good and outstanding features

155. Children under five are developing a very good awareness of their own needs and those of others. They leave their parents without fuss and follow well-established hygiene routines throughout the day. All are happy and secure in their environment and build up very good relationships with staff. They work together contented in small groups around teacher-directed activities or in individual play. All children's behaviour is very good and co-operate effectively in all aspects of their work and play.
156. Children have a very good understanding of what is right and wrong, sharing equipment, helping each other and make very good progress in developing a respect for rules. All children make very good progress in learning to take turns and wait patiently until directed; for example, all children know the rules within a circle-time session and their concentration skills are outstanding throughout. Children are very supportive of each other and demonstrate a caring, sensitive, attitude to one another. They are eager to demonstrate and share their feelings and achievements with adults.
157. All children know the importance of listening carefully, demonstrate very good attitudes towards their work and respond very well to routines and new learning experiences. They are highly motivated and stimulated to give of their best at all times. The majority of children develop a good ability to concentrate for lengthening periods of time and their work increases in accuracy. Many demonstrate responsibility for selecting and clearing away resources and for going on adult-directed messages in the school. All reception children demonstrate outstandingly good routines of behaviour when outside in the secure outside environment, whether in play, in adult-directed sessions.

Shortcomings

158. There are no major shortcomings but children's personal and social development would be further enhanced by more adult-child interaction.

Mathematical development

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Good and outstanding features

159. A very good range and a concentrated focus on the use of practical activities, such as water, shopping, measuring and the use of the 'washing line', are used effectively to raise the standard of achievement in developing children's good understanding of number. Children recognise and count numbers to 10 and many can count beyond; for example, in role-play as the Wizard, chosen individuals successfully count the number of children present, each morning.
160. Children make good progress in recognising two-dimensional shapes and understanding the terms circle, square and triangle when making their 'shape wizard' and a few children know that a bubble is a sphere. They are developing a good understanding of the mathematical language used throughout the curriculum. Children consistently match, sort and sequence numbers accurately in a range of formats.
161. Positional language is developing well through a wide range of experiences. For example, they place objects beside, under and over the picture of the scarecrow. Scrutiny of previous work, demonstrates that children's understanding of the concept of money develops very well.

Shortcomings

162. There are no major shortcomings.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Good and outstanding features

163. The impact of an outstanding range of first-hand experiences, in the form of visits and celebrations, significantly raises the standard of achievement and enriches children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The majority of reception children have very good observation skills and observe objects around them very carefully, and develop skills highlighting very fine detail, such as including their eye-colour in their self-portraits. They recognise, name and identify colours in a variety of formats; for example, in discussion, children detail accurately how they mix the colour brown and apply appropriate texture, using their finger nails, to resemble the bark of a tree.
164. All children have a very good understanding that living things should be treated with care and concern. Most children know that young lambs feed off the parent for some time and that plants need water and sunshine to grow. Children know that coke cans should not be thrown away, but recycled. Some children use computers well to support their learning; they successfully develop manipulative

skills to operate the mouse to request sound or visual effects, match numbers or words with pictures.

165. Children begin to develop a very good awareness of the sequence of time, present and past; an idea of the seasons and know that days get longer and daffodils come up in spring-time. Children know that chocolate melts if it is warmed in their hands and that Snowdon is the highest mountain in north Wales. In discussion, children name some healthy foods and have a good understanding of why eating some food damages teeth. These children have a very good understanding of foods that keep them healthy. In their work on sunny and rainy days, they identify waterproof clothes and the fact they are needed in order to stay dry.
166. From discussion with pupils and scrutiny of their work, it is clear that visitors play an important part in developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them and make a significant impact on standards achieved.

Shortcomings

167. There are no major shortcomings.

Physical development

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

168. Children develop good manipulative skills using pencils, paintbrushes and small tools such as glue sticks and scissors, for example, children add the finer detail of small stars and pieces of tracing paper to the shape they have drawn. Children make good progress in skills such as folding, moulding, pasting, and building for a variety of purposes. Their manipulative skills are well developed as was apparent when they were using the computer mouse. Children trace shapes accurately and follow patterns of increasing complexity.
169. Children are developing good spatial awareness and experiment with change of pace and physical effort when directed in the outdoor area. A well secured and resourced outside area promotes good progress in children's physical development. Routine behaviours are well established and children are well aware of the health and safety matters involved in the outdoor environment.
170. Pupils' gross-motor skills are well developed as they push, pull and peddle wheeled vehicles with increasing confidence and ability. They share vehicles when directed and follow the designated routes. All children demonstrate sheer enjoyment in their physical outdoor activity. There is also a well-resourced, indoor classroom that enhances and extends children's physical activity when the weather is inclement.

Shortcomings

171. There are no major shortcomings.

Creative development

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

172. All reception children demonstrate very good progression and independence in their creative work and they experiment with a wide range of materials, media and textures. For example, they use pens, crayons, paper and glue to create a picture of a scarecrow in the field. They confidently mix colour to express their ideas, representing accurately what they have seen. During a hand-painting session they know how to mix colours to make brown and know how to get an effective 'bark' texture. In discussion, they confidently demonstrate the process used. Children paint confidently using bold brush strokes.
173. Children display very good decision-making skills; for example, choosing colours to make their 'day and night' pictures of a scarecrow or deciding which materials to use when weaving a magic pot with coloured paper and decorating with a choice of sparkling glitter. Children demonstrate very good control when the handling glue and scissors.
174. Children make outstanding use of opportunities for role-play and confidently perform events in their daily lives in the home corner and take on the role of the Wizard, when directed. Children's imaginations are stimulated and are developing very well; for example, they guess and identify objects taken out of the 'wishing well' and they predict and discover what's 'new in the box', daily, effectively raising their standard of achievement.
175. Children have a good sense of rhythm. During a music session they confidently and ably copy and tap rhythms, including the syllables in their names and in that of their peers. They have a good knowledge of the names of musical instruments, including a variety of un-tuned musical instruments. More able children experiment with different instruments, describing very well the atmosphere they create. Children demonstrate and develop increased confidence and enjoyment when learning to sing new songs, and accompany pre-recorded music very well.

Shortcomings

176. There are no major shortcomings.

English

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

177. By the end of year 2, most pupils have good speaking and listening skills. They listen carefully to their teachers and are well motivated to take an active part in lessons. Pupils are eager to respond to questions and most pupils have a good vocabulary and speak with increasing confidence. When engaged in small group activities such as role-play of Victorian Wales, pupils listen well to each other and communicate their ideas very well.
178. Pupils make very good progress in reading, and standards of reading are good overall. Although there is considerable variation in pupils' reading skills, all pupils are enthusiastic readers, the majority of pupils in year 2 read with a good degree of fluency and accuracy. These pupils read with expression and, at best, are beginning to recognise inferences in their stories. Pupils are familiar with different authors and predict how stories might end. A notable feature is pupils' enthusiasm for reading, and this was apparent when probably one of the poorest readers in year 2 was keen to read aloud.
179. By the end of year 2, most pupils' writing conveys meaning through the use of simple words, phrases and short sentences. Some awareness of full stops and capital letters is evident and, in general, letters are usually shaped correctly and simple words spelt correctly.
180. Pupils' ICT skills are being well used to support pupils' learning, particularly to illustrate their work.

Shortcomings

181. Pupils' handwriting skills are underdeveloped.

Welsh second language

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

182. All pupils listen attentively to their teachers and are eager and enthusiastic to take part in Welsh lessons. Pupils in year 2 understand words, phrases and short sentences spoken by their teacher and they respond appropriately, for example, when indicating whether they want school lunches or sandwiches. Pupils have a good knowledge of a limited range of Welsh songs and they all join in enthusiastically.

183. Pupils' oral responses vary from single words to whole sentences. More able pupils communicate their meaning in well-structured sentences. In these instances, pronunciation is good and sentence patterns are generally correct.
184. Pupils read simple and familiar words and phrases that are within their experiences. These include words and phrases displayed in classrooms and around the school. More able pupils read simple text and understand what they have read.
185. Pupils in year 2 copy and write words and phrases with a reasonable degree of accuracy to express simple and personal information, such as naming the major body parts and clothes they wear. Simple words are usually spelt correctly and more able pupils have some awareness of basic punctuation.
186. A very good feature of the school is the regular use of everyday Welsh in class and in school activities, such as morning assembly and collective worship. Pupils respond well, indicating their developing understanding of the language and their increasing confidence to use it.

Shortcomings

187. Pupils' under-developed writing skills adversely affect their ability to express themselves on paper.

Mathematics

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Good and outstanding features

188. Pupils make very good progress in the development of their understanding and application of number. Pupils in year 2 count accurately and reliably and the more able have a good understanding of place value in two digit numbers. Most pupils in year 2 have good problem-solving skills, such as addition and subtraction of one and two digit numbers, such as when using money. These pupils have a good, developing understanding of fractions and realise that two halves and four quarters make a whole.
189. Pupils in year 2 have very good mental skills and use these skills well in addition and subtraction problems. Most pupils recognise even numbers and have a very good understanding of number sequences. More able pupils know that even numbers can be divided equally, whilst this is not possible with odd numbers.
190. Pupils in year 2 have a very good understanding of two and three-dimensional shapes and describe their properties, such as the number of sides and corners each shape has. Most pupils can name a good number of regular shapes.

Most pupils have begun to use non-standard and standard units to measure length.

191. Pupils use their mathematical skills very well in classroom activities. More able pupils represent their results as diagrams and graphs and draw realistic conclusions from their graphs. In an investigation, pupils collected data and illustrated it by bar graphs when finding out when classmates had birthdays. Pupils correctly found out that more pupils had birthdays in October than any other month.
192. Pupils' ICT skills are used well to support their learning.

Shortcomings

193. There are no major shortcomings.

Design and technology

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

194. Pupils have very good opportunities to examine and talk about commercial products before they embark on designing and making their own products, such as when designing and making doorstops. In discussion, more able pupils discuss their likes and dislikes and had a good understanding of "fitness for purpose".
195. Pupils have a good understanding of materials and their suitability for different purposes, such as the use of different fabrics for dressing a wooden doll. This work follows a visit to the Museum of Welsh Life and enabled pupils to develop a very good understanding of the limited range of materials available in Victorian Wales compared with the present day. Such studies also complemented and extended very well pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig.
196. Pupils' skills are developed progressively and built on the good practice established in reception. In reception, children become familiar with the basic techniques of weaving, using paper and this develops to using woollen thread in year 1, to produce patterns. Following their visit to a local historical house, pupils in year 2 create their own wall displays based on what they had seen. This was a further refinement on their weaving techniques, using different materials. This is very good practice and resulted in very good skill development, knowledge and understanding of fabrics and materials.

197. By the end of year 2, more able pupils have a very good understanding of the need to test their products and to match them to the use that will be made of them. When making a 'purse for Mrs Price' pupils tested their artefacts to see how efficient their purses were to hold coins. This led to very good discussions as to how their designs could be improved.
198. Pupils have a good understanding that materials can be joined in different ways depending on requirements. When making cardboard skeletons pupils recognise, for instance, that 'joints' had to allow movement, and that the parts had to be cut out accurately. This involved the very good and practical use of pupils' good measuring skills.
199. Good use is made of pupils' ICT skills, such as in design and in decorating pupils' models. Pupils are competent users of programs, such as clip art.

Shortcomings

200. Pupils' fine motor skills are underdeveloped, such as in marking, cutting and fixing, and this adversely affects the quality of their final product.
201. Pupils' poor writing and drawing skills inhibit their ability to record their ideas.

Religious education

The school's scheme of work is based on the LEA locally agreed syllabus.

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

202. Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of caring for and respecting each other and this is an outstanding feature of pupils' behaviour in school. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of friendship and what makes a good friend. They know that people's feelings are affected by events.
203. Pupils in year 2 have a good recall of the life of Jesus, including the story of Christmas and the significance of Easter for Christians. Visits to the local church and chapel have enhanced their knowledge of church and chapel artefacts, and they have a good understanding of their significance, such as a lighted candle and a crucifix in Christianity.
204. Pupils know that the Bible is an important book for Christians and that prayer is a way of speaking to God. The daily act of collective worship is an integral part of the school day and makes a good contribution to developing pupils' understanding of moral issues.

205. Pupils have a limited knowledge of other faiths including Judaism and Hinduism. Pupils in year 2 have a good recollection of some non-Christian religious festivals, such as Divali, the Hindu festival of light,

Shortcomings

206. Pupils' knowledge of non-Christian faiths is limited.

School's response to the inspection

207. The staff and governors have carefully considered the outcomes of our recent inspection and are delighted that the findings acknowledge that Goetre Infant is a very good school with outstanding features, which has continued to improve since the last inspection.
208. The head teacher in her role as nominee felt that the process was open and honest and that the role was developed to the full in a mutually supportive capacity as detailed in the contract. Judgements were arrived at following careful consideration of evidence and full and frank discussions.
209. It was pleasing to note that the inspectors recognised our pupils' positive attitudes to learning and behaviour also the high quality of teaching and the support provided by classroom assistants. They acknowledged that the governing body is very involved, and supportive in the work of the school. They also commented on the excellent working relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils.
210. Staff were pleased that the inspectors felt that the school had a sense of purpose that promotes and sustains improvement with a clear sense of high expectations for all its pupils.
211. The report also recognises the very good quality of the schools self-evaluation processes that were presented in the very detailed self-evaluation report.
212. Inspectors also commented on the quality of partnerships with parents and the community and that the school has an inclusive nature and a caring ethos.
213. At Goetre Infant we are proud of our children and proud of what we are able to achieve in many areas. An action plan will be put in place to address the recommendations within the report.
214. Staff and governors would like to thank the inspectors for their cooperation, integrity and professionalism. Staff agreed that the inspection was a positive experience and that pupils will benefit from the recommendations. The inspection team were courteous and the inspection was conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Appendix A

Basic information about the school

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Name of school | Goetre Infants' School |
| School type | Foundation |
| Age-range of pupils | 4-7 |
| Address of school | Rowan Way Gurnos Merthyr Tydfil |
| Post-code | CF47 9PB |
| Telephone number | 01685 722069 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Headteacher | Mrs Catherine Denise Morgan MBE |
| Date of appointment | September 1994 |
| Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority | Mr David Williams Merthyr Tydfil LEA |
| Registered inspector | Mr Eifion Morgan |
| Dates of inspection | 14 th – 16 th March 2005. |

Appendix B

School data and indicators

| Number of pupils in each year group | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|----|----|----|-------|
| Year group | N (fte) | R | Y1 | Y2 | Total |
| Number of pupils | - | 59 | 51 | 47 | 157 |

| Total number of teachers | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------|
| | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time equivalent (fte) |
| Number of teachers | 7 | - | 7 |

| Staffing information | |
|--|------|
| Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes) | 1.28 |
| Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes | |
| Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes | 1.8 |
| Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes | 28 |
| Teacher (fte): class ratio | 1.28 |

| Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection | | | |
|--|-----|-----|--------------|
| Term | R | KS1 | Whole School |
| Spring 2004 | 89% | 89% | 89% |
| Summer 2004 | 91% | 90% | 90.5% |
| Autumn 2004 | 90% | 91% | 90.5% |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals | 71% |
| Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection | 0 |

Appendix C

National Curriculum Assessment Results

End of Key Stage 1:

| National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results 2004 | | | Number of pupils in Y2: | | | | | 51 |
|---|--------------------|----------|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| Percentage of pupils at each level | | | | | | | | |
| | | | D | W | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| English: | Teacher Assessment | School | 0 | 12 | 33 | 55 | | |
| | | National | 0 | 4 | 14 | 63 | 20 | |
| En: reading | Teacher Assessment | School | 0 | 16 | 31 | 39 | 14 | |
| | | National | 0 | 4 | 14 | 55 | | |
| En:writing | Teacher Assessment | School | 0 | 20 | 25 | 55 | | |
| | | National | 0 | 5 | 14 | 69 | 11 | |
| En: speaking and listening | Teacher Assessment | School | 0 | 10 | 16 | 75 | | |
| | | National | 0 | 3 | 12 | 63 | 22 | |
| Mathematics | Teacher Assessment | School | 0 | 6 | 25 | 65 | 4 | |
| | | National | 0 | 2 | 11 | 63 | 24 | |
| Science | Teacher Assessment | School | 0 | 4 | 22 | 75 | | |
| | | National | 0 | 2 | 10 | 66 | 22 | |

| Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment | | | |
|---|-----|----------|-----|
| In the school | 53% | In Wales | 80% |

- D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

Appendix D

Evidence base of the inspection

- A team of three inspectors who were present at the school for seven inspector days carried out the inspection.
- Pre-inspection meetings were held with the headteacher and staff and with parents and the governing body to discuss the life and work of the school.
- Forty-six questionnaires were completed by parents and carefully analysed.
- Discussions were held with the head and staff with responsibilities, and support staff.
- School documentation and samples of pupils' work were examined.
- Twenty-one lessons or sessions were observed.
- A sample of pupils' work from across the ability range in each year group was examined.
- Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils' reading.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during break periods, at lunchtime and at the end and beginning of the school sessions.
- Inspectors attended assemblies and observed extra-curricular activities.
- Post inspection meetings were held with the staff and the governing body.

Appendix E

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

| Team member | Responsibilities |
|--|---|
| Mr Eifion R Morgan Registered Inspector | Context Summary Recommendations KQ1 (not 1.12) KQ2 KQ3 (only 3.9) KQ5 KQ6 English Welsh (second language) Mathematics Design and Technology Religious Education |
| Mrs Julie Jones Team Inspector | KQ3 (not 3.8-3.14) KQ4 (4.10-4.12) KQ7 Early Years |
| Mrs Janet Warr Lay Inspector | KQ1 (1.12) KQ3 (3.8.-3.14) KQ4 (not 4.10 – 4.12) |

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Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, head teacher, staff and pupils, for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the inspection.

Summary Report for Parents

**Inspection under Section 10 of the
Schools Inspections Act 1996**

**Goetre Infants' School
Rowan Way
Gurnos
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 9PB**

School Number:2036/675

Date of Inspection: 14th – 16th March 2005

By

**Mr Eifion Morgan
WO 87/16248**

Date: 19th May 2005

Under Estyn contract number: T/155/04P

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Goetre Infants' School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents more information about their child's school. A copy of the summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

The inspection of Goetre Infants' School took place between 14th and 16th March 2005. An independent team of inspectors, led by Mr Eifion Morgan undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Grade 1 | good with outstanding features |
| Grade 2 | good features and no important shortcomings |
| Grade 3 | good features outweigh shortcomings |
| Grade 4 | some good features, but shortcomings in important areas |
| Grade 5 | many important shortcomings |

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who attain the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who attain the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|
| Year | R | Y1 | Y2 | Y3 | Y4 | Y5 | Y6 |
| Ages | 4-5 | 5-6 | 6-7 | 7-8 | 8-9 | 9-10 | 10-11 |

Secondary phase:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Year | Y7 | Y8 | Y9 | Y10 | Y11 | Y12 | Y13 |
| Ages | 11-12 | 12-13 | 13-14 | 14-15 | 15-16 | 16-17 | 17-18 |

The national curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

| | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Key stage 1 | Year 1 and Year 2 |
| Key stage 2 | Year 3 to Year 6 |
| Key stage 3 | Year 7 to Year 9 |
| Key stage 4 | Year 10 and Year 11 |

Context

The nature of the provider

Goetre Infants' school is located in Gurnos – a large housing estate to the north of Merthyr Tydfil town centre. The majority of pupils live in the locality but a few come from the nearby Galon Uchaf estate. When pupils are seven years old they transfer to the adjoining junior school.

There are currently 157 pupils on roll but numbers have fallen consistently over the last few years. This number includes 16 pupils in two Observation classes for moderate and specific learning difficulties – some of whom come from outside the immediate catchment area.

This is a community first area and an area of high unemployment. The school is actively involved in community initiatives such as, People in Communities Family project with the overall aim of breaking the cycle of deprivation. The school has substantial involvement with the Social Services. The area is economically disadvantaged and this is reflected in the high percentage of pupils (71%) registered as being entitled to receive free school meals. This is well above the national average.

A high percentage of children entering the school have very poorly developed personal, social and academic skills, as is reflected in the school's baseline assessment results. Virtually all the children have received pre-school education. The school has identified 82 pupils (54%) as having special educational needs. This is well above the national average. One pupil in the Observation classes has a statement of special educational needs, however, there are no pupils for whom the National Curriculum (NC) is disapplied. None of the pupils come from a home where Welsh is the predominant language.

The school aims to support and encourage each child to achieve his/her full potential and to become a responsible and caring member of the community.

These principles are reflected in the school's aims that are to:

- provide the best possible education for children;
- help children read, write, listen and speak effectively;
- help children learn about mathematics, science and all aspects of technology;
- help children care for and understand the world in which they live;
- help children know that they live in Wales and to be proud of their Welsh heritage;
- help children develop skills in the creative arts and to enjoy and appreciate different kinds of music and works of art;
- give children opportunities to enjoy and learn skills of physical education;

- help children develop a respect for religious and moral values and an understanding and tolerance for the beliefs of others;
- help children learn that courtesy, good manners and consideration for others are very important;
- encourage and develop the philosophy of teamwork, all equal partners working together for the good of all members of the school community.

The school's priorities and targets

The school's priorities and targets for improvement include:

- a continual emphasis on raising standards;
- to refine and further develop its assessment procedures and the role of subject co-ordinators;
- to review and evaluate the curriculum and in particular develop the new foundation phase;
- to continue to develop community links;
- to continue to improve SEN procedures;
- to implement teachers' workload agreement.

The school was last inspected in April 1999. Since then, the school has made good progress in addressing the key issues for action and standards have continued to improve over recent years. Since the last inspection, the school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark for literacy and numeracy.

Summary

Goetre Infant School is a very good school with many outstanding features. It provides its pupils with a very good quality of education that broadens and extends their experiences and makes an outstanding contribution to their personal, social and academic development. The school is a supportive and caring environment where all pupils are valued and respected. Staff, including non-teaching staff, are highly committed to the progress and well-being of all pupils. The school has benefited from the outstanding leadership of the headteacher.

The school's self-evaluation report is based on the seven key questions identified by Estyn (see below for details). The school judged its work to be good with outstanding features (Grade 1) in two of these areas, namely, 'how well learners are cared for, guided and supported' and the 'efficiency with which the school used its resources'. The inspection team agreed with these judgements.

The inspection team judged that the school had underestimated its effectiveness in the five other areas, and that there were no important shortcomings in any of the areas, and outstanding features in four of them. In the judgement of the inspection team each of the grades should be raised to reflect this.

In summary, the inspection team judged the school's work as follows:

Table of grades awarded

| Key question | Inspection grade |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1 How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| 2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment? | 1 |
| 3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community? | 1 |
| 4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |
| 5 How effective are leadership and strategic management? | 1 |
| 6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards? | 1 |
| 7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources? | 1 |

Standards

Standards of achievement in the areas of learning and subjects inspected are as follows:

| Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 24% | 71% | 5% | | |

Standards of achievement in virtually all lessons and areas of learning are at least good with no important shortcomings (Grade 2), and good with outstanding features (Grade 1) in around a quarter of all lessons. This is well above the Welsh Assembly Government all-Wales target of 50% of lessons being Grade 2 or better. This reflects a significant improvement in standards since the last inspection.

Baseline assessments, school data and observations during the inspection indicate that children's attainment, on entry, is well below average. The overall quality of educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

The standards of achievement of children under five are as follows:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Language, literacy and communication | Grade 2 |
| Personal and social development | Grade 1 |
| Mathematical development | Grade 1 |
| Knowledge and understanding of the world | Grade 1 |
| Creative development | Grade 2 |
| Physical development | Grade 2 |

Children under five make very good progress in lessons from a low, and often very low, starting point, both in terms of their academic ability and personal development. The very high priority given to purposeful interaction between adults and children effectively promotes and develops good standards of listening and speaking and the more able children recognise some letter sounds. In adult-directed activities children make some progress in writing, but overall pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped. The majority of children understand and respond well to a good range of everyday commands in Welsh and pupils' oral bilingual skills are good.

Most children in reception count accurately to 10 and many count well beyond that number. Pupils' computer skills are progressing well and they have good manipulative skills, such as when controlling the computer mouse.

Standards of achievement in the five subjects inspected in key stage 1 are as follows:

| Subject | Key Stage 1 |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| English | Grade 2 |
| Mathematics | Grade 1 |
| Welsh | Grade 2 |
| Design & Technology | Grade 2 |
| Religious Education | Grade 2 |

Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2004 as judged by teacher assessment, in the National Curriculum core subjects of English, mathematics and science was below national and local (LEA) averages. They were below those of similar schools in Wales, based on the number of pupils entitled to receive free school meals. This is an invidious comparison, however, since the number of pupils at school who are entitled to receive free school meals is well above the highest number for which comparative data is available.

The results of the statutory assessments at the end of key stage 1, over the last few years, shows a continuing upward trend in English, mathematics and science. More than half the pupils (in 2004) achieved the expected levels (level 2) in the three core subjects (core subject indicator). This is despite an increasing number of pupils identified as requiring additional help with their language skills when they start school. Scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection and teacher assessment reflects pupils' higher achievement in mathematics and in reading, where several pupils achieve level 3. Standards of pupils' writing, however, remain low.

All pupils in key stage 1, regardless of their background, and including those identified as having special educational needs, make very good progress in school. Pupils develop very good listening skills. Most pupils speak clearly and their vocabulary illustrates the very good progress they are making. Pupils' reading skills develop very well; pupils of all abilities are enthusiastic readers. The development of pupils' writing skills, however, has not kept pace with their progress in other aspects of language.

By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good Welsh vocabulary. They understand words and commands used by their teacher and are eager to take part in classroom activities such as role-play. Pupils use simple words and phrases confidently and their pronunciation of Welsh words is good. Their writing in the language is however curtailed by their limited writing skills.

Pupils in key stage 1 have good numeracy skills and the more able pupils in both year 1 and year 2 show good basic mental ability. Most pupils use computers confidently to support their learning in classrooms.

The achievement of pupils in the Observation classes is good with outstanding features. The special educational needs of these pupils are extensive and wide-ranging, but all make very good progress and are fully integrated into the daily life of the school. The aim of returning as many pupils as possible to mainstream school provision is achieved.

Pupils' personal, social and learning educational skills are very well developed, and overall, the added value to children's learning is an outstanding feature of the school. All pupils take an active part in the life and work of the school and every pupil is an integral part of the school community. Pupils enjoy school life and they are well motivated, behave responsibly and show respect for others. By year 2 most pupils show commendable levels of self-discipline and decision-making skills, as was evident in their role-play activities of Victorian life. Pupils, in their small groups, working outside their classroom, developed their ideas through active involvement and discussion. This illustrates the growing maturity of these pupils and their capacity to work co-operatively. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils in the Observational classes are consistently good.

Pupils' understanding of equal opportunities is very well developed throughout the school and they all take part in school activities, including visits to the locality and further afield. Such visits substantially extend pupils' limited experiences and help them to get to know and understand their local culture and heritage, and that of Wales and are a significant factor in developing Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig. Pupils' respect for the diversity of beliefs, attitudes and cultural traditions within society and their understanding of such issues are developed through consideration of others including those less fortunate than themselves.

Attendance rates are satisfactory, averaging about 90% for the past three terms. Most pupils are punctual and keen to attend school. Registration is conducted efficiently and in accordance with statutory requirements.

The school functions very well as a supportive, happy and orderly community. Pupils enjoy coming to school and, in discussion, it was obvious that, to the vast majority of children, the school is a highly significant and major part of their lives. It is a point of reference where they know that they are cared for and respected as individuals. The school is a highly significant influence on the lives of these pupils and plays a significant part in raising their self-esteem and developing their feelings of self-worth.

The quality of education and training

The quality of teaching observed in the areas of learning and subjects inspected is as follows:

| Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 38% | 62% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

No lessons were seen where there were important shortcomings and an exceptional aspect of the teaching is the high proportion of lessons that were good with outstanding features (Grade 1). The quality of the teaching is well above the Welsh Assembly Government expectations and a substantial improvement since the last inspection.

An outstanding feature of all lessons is the excellent relationships between pupils and their teachers and support staff. This creates an outstandingly productive working environment that very successfully fosters learning. Other good and often outstanding features of the teaching include teachers' detailed lesson planning that incorporates opportunities to develop pupils' basic and key skills. Lessons are also well differentiated and teachers use questions very well to probe pupils' understanding, and this ensures that all pupils are actively involved. Classroom support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, notably in pupils' personal development. Teachers' planning ensures continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

Assessment procedures are good overall. Children's learning needs are assessed soon after they start school, and appropriate support is provided. Teachers are vigilant in marking pupils' work and this helps them to understand how they can improve. End-of-year targets are clearly identified for all pupils, however, pupils' achievements are not regularly assessed so that short-term targets can be set and pupils' progress tracked throughout the year.

The school recently developed key skills scheme of work is detailed and well used by teachers to inform their planning. However, the school does not have assessment procedures to ensure the progressive development of key and basic skills across the curriculum.

The provision for learners with SEN in mainstream classes is very good. These pupils are very well supported and play an active part in the life of the school. The school's support for the minority of pupils with challenging behaviour is very good.

The SEN needs of pupils in the Observation classes are very well assessed and their progress, including their behaviour, is routinely and very carefully tracked. Teachers and support staff work very efficiently as a team in providing continuity of support based on assessed needs. This is an exemplar of good practice.

The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The headteacher, teaching and support staff are successful in creating a sensitive, supportive ethos built on care and respect for others.

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. An air of reverence is established and maintained throughout morning worship and a strong sense of community is evident.

The aims of the school to encourage and promote positive values and attitudes are fully realised. The quality of relationships throughout the school is excellent and this contributes significantly to pupils' confidence, self-esteem and very good behaviour. The headteacher, teaching and support staff provide exemplary role models for pupils in their care and they ensure pupils have a good understanding of right from wrong.

Pupils relate very well to each other, consistently offering mutual help and support in work and play. The youngest children have settled quickly into their new environment and co-operate well with each other and with adults. Pupils of all ages willingly accept responsibilities; they carry out their duties sensibly and cheerfully and take delight in helping their teachers.

This is an inclusive school that actively and successfully promotes equality of opportunity for all and is free of any race or gender discrimination. It provides a broad and balanced holistic curriculum very well enriched by visits to the locality and further afield. These visits are highlights in pupils' education and make an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning experiences and their knowledge and understanding of their locality and of the heritage and culture of Wales.

The headteacher and staff place a high priority on pastoral provision throughout the school and provide outstanding care, guidance and support for all pupils. The school has an appropriate policy and procedures to deal with child protection issues, and all adults in the school are aware of the correct procedures to be followed.

The school enjoys very good relationships with parents. In the pre-inspection meeting and the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents reported a very high level of satisfaction with the school and an appreciation of the contribution of the school to their children's personal and academic development. The support parents give children at home is variable, at best, it makes a significant difference to pupils' learning.

The school recognises the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and ensures that all pupils are valued and treated with respect and dignity. There are effective measures in place to eliminate all forms of oppressive behaviour, including racial discrimination, bullying and all other forms of harassment. None was seen during the inspection.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's leadership is good with outstanding features. She has been the driving force in taking the school forward and her influence pervades all aspects of school life, creating a vibrant and warm learning environment for all

children. She gives the school a clear sense of direction and is very well supported by the assistant head and all staff, including non-teaching staff. The headteacher is held in the highest regard by her colleagues and her outstanding contribution has been recognised nationally.

Central to the school's aims and values is its commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all, whatever the pupils' background and educational needs. This is reflected in all aspects of school life.

The school has responded very well to national and local priorities. The work of the school is recognised by such awards as the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Investors in People award. At a local level, the school works with parents to improve pupils' achievements, and the school is regarded by the LEA as an exemplar of good practice.

Staff appraisal is an integral part of the school's management procedures and is highly effective in raising standards. The school has also benefited from a very stable, dedicated staff whose professionalism and commitment enables them to deal with challenges admirably, whilst offering pupils a very stimulating range of learning experiences, and fully supporting their personal development.

The governing body meets its legal requirements. Governors are fully supportive of the school and proud of its achievements. They are kept well informed of school developments by the headteacher at regular meetings. Governors are involved in the school's strategic planning and have been actively involved in producing the school's self-evaluation report. This now provides further opportunities for them to be involved in its implementation. Finances are very well managed and the school operates principles of best value for money.

The school's self-evaluation report is good with outstanding features. The information was first hand, and supported by appropriate evidence. It identifies the school's many strengths, and an outstanding feature of the report is its clarity and identification of areas for development. Another outstanding feature of the school's self-evaluation is the monitoring of the teaching and learning. The headteacher, as part of her monitoring role, has set clear lesson guidelines and her perceptive comments and teachers' self-critical approach, has resulted in the current good and very good teaching.

The school staff are suitably qualified and experienced. All make an outstanding contribution to ensuring the wellbeing of pupils and to the smooth running of the school. Resources are used efficiently and the school accommodation is kept in good condition and is an attractive environment for pupils' learning. The school manages its resources very well and provides very good value for money. The school has made good very progress since the last inspection in addressing all the issues identified in the previous report.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the school needs to:-

R1* refine its current assessment procedures so as to assess pupils' achievements at regular intervals during the year and to use the results to:

- (i) track pupils' short term progress;
- (ii) Inform teachers' planning;
- (iii) make learners aware of their learning objectives so that they can evaluate their own work.

R2 develop assessment procedures to ensure the progressive development of pupils' key and basic skills;

R3* improve pupils' writing skills.

* This is recognised by the school as an area for development.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, head teacher, staff and pupils, for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the inspection.