

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

**Hirwaun Primary School
Glannant Street
Hirwaun
CF44 9NF**

School Number: 6742170

Date of Inspection: 21-23 November 2005

by

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- * pupil referral units;
- * independent schools;
- * further education;
- * adult community-based learning;
- * youth support services;
- * LEAs;
- * teacher education and training;
- * work-based learning;
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Hirwaun Primary School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection 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 this summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

The inspection of Hirwaun Primary School took place between 21 and 23 November 2005. An independent team of inspectors, led by Stephanie James, Reporting Inspector, 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

There are three types of inspection.

For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.

For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.

For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects.

For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects.

Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

This school received a **standard** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

The term 'Reception' (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	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5	Y 6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y 13
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. Hirwaun Primary School is a community school in the heart of Hirwaun village at the top of the Cynon Valley in the unitary authority of Rhondda Cynon Taff. It serves a mixed catchment area consisting of private and local authority housing. The main employer in the area was the local colliery, but that now employs far fewer people. This, in conjunction with the relocation of other employers, has led to high levels of unemployment in the locality and pockets of social deprivation. A recent trend has been the growth of a large number of new housing developments and many people therefore travel some distance to work.
2. The school caters for pupils from four to eleven years of age. There are 205 pupils on roll. Children are admitted to the reception class at the beginning of the school year in which they become five. Most of these children have attended Hirwaun Nursery School. Ninety-seven per cent of pupils are of white ethnic origin and 99 per cent of them speak English at home. Two per cent of pupils speak Chinese, in addition to English. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Fifty per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is much higher than the national average of 19 per cent. Seventeen per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs (SEN), which is just below the national average of 20 per cent. No pupils have a statement of special educational need. Information from baseline assessments shows that pupils' attainment on entry to the reception class is below average overall and a significant number of children have poor language and social skills.
3. The school is set in pleasant, spacious grounds. There are four playgrounds, two seated areas, an enclosed garden, playing fields and a developing woodland. There are two separate buildings. Pupils in key stage 2 are accommodated in the 'lower block'. The 'upper block', has recently been extensively remodelled to form a new centre for the early years and key stage 1 pupils. At present, the early years comprises one reception class but it will be enlarged to include a nursery class in January 2006. Each building has classrooms, activity areas, a kitchen, toilet facilities, a central hall and its own playground. A pre-school unit for children with communication disorders is also on site but was not a focus for this inspection. The school has received the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark and the Investors in People award since the last inspection.
4. The head teacher has led the school since January 2001. He is the second new head teacher to have been appointed since the last inspection in October 1999. There are seven full-time teachers in addition to the head, and two part-time teachers. Pupils are organised into seven single-age classes, but are grouped according to need in the mornings for English and mathematics. Two permanent teachers were on maternity leave at the time of the inspection. A supply teacher came to the school to cover the year 6 class on

the Friday before the inspection started and was present throughout the inspection. Another part-time supply teacher was working with the years 5/6 mathematics set in the mornings.

5. During the inspection the school's provision was limited slightly because the Local Health Authority imposed health and safety restrictions following the outbreak of an infectious disease in the area. On the second day of the inspection, the boiler in the upper block broke down. Pupils in the early years and key stage 1 could not attend school that day because the temperature in the block was well below that recommended for their health and safety. However, the programme of visits to classes by inspectors was adjusted so that they focused on the provision for pupils in key stage 2 on the second day and the provision for pupils in the early years and key stage 1 on the third day, enabling the inspection to go ahead as planned.

The school's priorities and targets

6. The main aim of the school is for pupils to: "Achieve their full potential in becoming independent learners and good citizens."
7. In order for pupils to succeed in realising this aim the school believes it must:
 - have high expectations in social, moral and academic skills;
 - create a happy, challenging and nurturing environment;
 - develop pupils' self-esteem;
 - develop mutual respect for each other and adults;
 - form an effective partnership with parents;
 - involve the community in the school.
8. It further believes that to create this, as a staff they must:
 - work together being open, approachable and consistent;
 - produce the highest quality of teaching and learning;
 - communicate effectively;
 - set achievable targets;
 - involve parents in the responsibility for their children's education.
9. Key priorities in the school's development plan for the current year 2005-2006 are to:
 - maintain standards in writing;
 - develop the use of information and communications technology in music;
 - develop investigation and problem solving activities in mathematics;
 - develop pupils' critical skills;
 - develop global citizenship and sustainability;
 - implement fully the new workload agreement;
 - build new teams as a result of the workload agreement;
 - improve aspects of the building in both the junior and infant blocks.

Summary

10. Hirwaun Primary School is a good school with many outstanding features. It has made extremely good progress since the last inspection in 1999 in many areas of its work because of the commitment to improving the quality of its provision shown by all the staff under the excellent leadership of the head teacher.
11. The inspection team judged the school's work as follows:

Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	1
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?	2
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?	2

Standards

12. During the inspection, standards of achievement in the lessons observed in the six subjects inspected were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
14%	82%	4%	0%	0%

13. In 96 per cent of lessons, pupils' standards of achievement were judged to be grade 2 or above, which is more than 30 per cent above the Welsh Assembly Government's target for 2007. This consistency in achievement is an outstanding feature of the school's provision.
14. Many children enter the reception class with below average attainment and a significant number of them have poor language skills. All pupils make good, often outstanding progress as they move through the school, regardless of their background. They therefore achieve good and very good standards in their knowledge, understanding and skills by the end of key stage 2.
15. Pupils with additional learning needs, including those with special educational needs (SEN), make good progress and achieve well, relative to their abilities.
16. 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.

17. In the early years, overall standards in the six areas of learning are as follows:

Areas of Learning for Under-fives

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

18. Children under five make good progress and achieve good standards with no important shortcomings in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and in their use of numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) through their activities in all six areas of learning. Their bilingual skills are developing well.

19. In key stages 1 and 2, overall standards in the subjects inspected are as follows:

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
English	2	2
Science	2	1
Information Technology	1	1
Art	2	2
Physical Education	2	2

20. All pupils make good progress and achieve good standards in using the key skills of speaking and reading in their work across the curriculum. Pupils' progress and achievement in the other key skills of listening and writing, and in their use of numeracy and ICT are outstanding. Their confidence in using ICT is impressive. The standard of presentation of their work in all subjects is consistently high and another outstanding feature.

21. Pupils use the Welsh language in a variety of contexts, but their bilingual competence in key stages 1 and 2 is limited as they do not progressively communicate and move confidently and easily from speaking Welsh to English and vice-versa.

22. In both key stages, pupils' performance in the 2005 National Curriculum assessments was well above the average of other schools in the Local Education Authority (LEA), and in Wales, in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school's excellent performance places it in the top 25 per cent when compared with similar schools.

23. Pupils make very good progress in developing and applying new knowledge, understanding and skills in their work in all subjects under the guidance of their teachers, but are sometimes less confident in using their knowledge and

skills to learn independently. Although they have begun to evaluate their own work and are sometimes aware of their targets, at other times pupils are unclear about how they can further improve.

24. Pupils make good, sometimes outstanding, progress towards fulfilling their potential and moving on to the next stage of learning. In many lessons they complete a considerable amount of work in the time available and thoroughly enjoy the challenges provided. Gifted mathematicians in years 4, 5 and 6, for example, thrive on the challenges offered to them in the GCSE mathematics class taught by the head teacher.
25. Pupils' attitudes towards learning are consistently very good. This contributes significantly to the high standards they achieve in their work. Their behaviour in lessons, around the school and outside at play is good with no important shortcomings.
26. Attendance has improved since the last inspection, but despite the school's efforts, overall levels are below the Wales and LEA average.
27. All pupils make very good progress in their personal and social skills. The quality of relationships between all members of the school community is very good. Pupils respond well to the positive atmosphere and clear expectations for behaviour and show respect for others and their views. They are developing a good appreciation of the diversity of beliefs and cultural traditions.

The quality of education and training

28. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
30%	64%	6%	0%	0%

29. Ninety-four per cent of lessons were judged to be grade 2 or above, which is over 20 per cent higher than the national picture reported by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in her most recent report. The overall quality of teaching in the school has risen markedly since the last inspection.
30. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is characterised by high expectations of what pupils can achieve and teachers very effectively stimulate and challenge pupils to achieve their full potential. The use of resources is an outstanding feature of their teaching.
31. Teachers maintain a brisk pace in lessons and employ a wide range of teaching skills that help to maximise pupils' learning. They are also expert at exploiting the full potential of the interactive whiteboard to support, enhance and reinforce pupils' learning. Many lessons make learning fun. This is another outstanding feature of the quality of teaching.

32. The quality of planning is very good and builds successfully on what has gone before. Throughout the school, additional adults are deployed effectively to support pupils' learning. In the early years, planning for the nursery nurse, parents and students to support practical activities is good. Planning for them to enhance and support the quality of children's imaginative play is, however, less well developed.
33. The overall quality of assessment and recording is good. Teachers make good use of standardised tests to assess pupils' progress and use the information gained to focus on pupils' learning needs. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and there are some good examples of appropriate guidance on how pupils can improve their work, but this is not consistent throughout the school.
34. Annual reports to parents about their children's progress are of good quality, contain evaluative comments on pupils' achievements and outline clear targets for improvement.
35. The school responds very well to pupils' learning needs and provides equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum is stimulating and enriched by many relevant practical experiences. Pupils enjoy participating in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
36. Grouping arrangements in key stage 2 are highly effective in helping pupils of all abilities to achieve their potential. The provision for pupils who are talented mathematicians is outstanding and a unique feature of the school.
37. The overall provision for pupils to develop and apply their key skills in their work across the curriculum is very good. The opportunities planned and provided for pupils to use their developing skills in writing, numeracy and ICT, in particular, are outstanding.
38. The school's provision for personal and social education (PSE) is outstanding. Learning experiences also successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
39. One of the strengths of the provision is the progress pupils make in their social development. Pupils' moral and cultural development is good. They are developing a sound understanding of the difference between right and wrong. A good range of visits and visitors makes a significant contribution to their cultural development. Pupils' spiritual awareness generally develops well. On some occasions, however, opportunities are missed to give pupils time to reflect on issues and experiences.
40. The partnership with parents, other providers and the local community is good.
41. *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig*, the Welsh dimension in the curriculum, features prominently in the life and work of the school. Opportunities are provided in

subjects across the curriculum to raise pupils' awareness of the culture of Wales but pupils' bilingual skills are under developed.

42. The school shows a clear commitment to equal opportunity for all and there are many outstanding qualities evident in the school's attitude to combating social disadvantage.
43. The school is at an early stage of promoting sustainable development and global citizenship in a practical way in the everyday life of the school.
44. The school plans and manages care and support arrangements very well and works well with parents and carers. The head teacher makes a significant contribution to this aspect of the school's work.
45. Systems to monitor and address any concerns relating to pupils' behaviour are an outstanding feature of the school's work. Pupils' academic performance is monitored closely. However, the information gained is not always consistently used in all classes to ensure that pupils understand how to improve their learning.
46. Overall, the provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Class teachers know their pupils well and are fully involved in the planning and delivery of the Individual Education Programmes (IEPs) of pupils with SEN. Non-teaching and teaching support for key stage 1 pupils with SEN is limited, but when staff are deployed to support pupils with SEN they make a very good contribution to pupils' progress.
47. The day-to-day care and guidance for pupils is of a very high quality and a particularly notable feature of the school's work. Great emphasis is placed on raising pupils' self- esteem and confidence.
48. The diversity of other faiths, cultures and values is promoted well throughout the school but sometimes opportunities to prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society are missed.

Leadership and management

49. On his appointment in 2001, the head teacher identified key changes that were needed to improve the quality of the provision and raise the standards that pupils were then achieving. However, he managed change at a pace with which staff were comfortable. His leadership has been outstanding, and crucial, in bringing about the desired changes.
50. With the help of the clear sense of direction provided by the head teacher, teachers have been outstandingly successful in working as a team with a shared sense of purpose to develop their teaching skills and raise standards.
51. The head teacher and staff with management responsibilities are very effective in setting and agreeing challenging but realistic targets for improvement. Staff appraisal procedures are very effective and staff

development has been a key ingredient in the drive to improve standards and quality.

52. The head teacher keeps the governing body well informed about the school's performance, as do annual reviews by members of staff with management responsibilities.
53. A number of governors are actively involved, or work, in the school so that they have a good picture of the quality of its provision. They contribute to the school's self-evaluation process and have a good understanding of the school's priorities for development. The chair of governors, in particular, is a good critical friend of the school.
54. In almost every area of its work, the governing body fulfils the legal duties placed upon it. The governors' annual report to parents meets legal requirements but the school prospectus has minor omissions in the information it should contain.
55. A culture of systematic self-evaluation has been established for some time, where all stakeholders' views are taken into account. Leaders of all subjects evaluate their subjects through regular monitoring exercises. Parents' views are taken into account through questionnaires and pupils' views are also sought on a range of relevant issues. The school's self-evaluation process is outstanding in identifying, prioritising and addressing key areas for improvement. The head teacher, staff and governing body all show a clear commitment to high standards.
56. In most respects, the inspection team agreed with the school's identification of its strengths and areas for improvement. The inspection team agreed with the judgements made by the school in five of the seven key questions. Where there was a difference in judgement, the inspection team awarded higher grades in key questions 5 and 6. The discrepancy is due to the school's underestimation of the impact of its strategies to improve standards.
57. The school is appropriately staffed with qualified and experienced teachers who have the necessary knowledge to teach all aspects of the National Curriculum. Some classes are large, but the arrangements made for literacy and numeracy alleviate this in the morning sessions.
58. The school administrator works efficiently and effectively to ensure that the day-to-day running of the school functions smoothly. The school is well served by its caretaker and ancillary staff.
59. Overall, the school has a very good stock of learning resources that are used very effectively to enhance pupils' learning experiences. The considerable investment in ICT equipment has had an outstanding impact on pupils' progress not only in learning and standards of achievement in information technology, but also on all subjects across the curriculum.

60. Subject leaders regularly review, audit and make informed decisions to purchase resources. These are carefully costed and matched to priorities set out in the SDP. Major purchases are carefully scrutinised by the governing body and their effectiveness reported on by the head teacher. The school provides very good value for money.
61. Progress since the last inspection in 1999 has been outstanding and all the key issues identified then have been addressed very successfully

Recommendations

- R1 Further develop pupils' bilingual competence and their independent research and learning skills.
- R2 Ensure greater consistency across the school in the marking of pupils' work and pupils' involvement in setting and reviewing precise targets to improve their own learning.
- R3 Ensure the prospectus meets all statutory requirements.

The recommendation to improve pupils' independent research and learning skills is a target in the current School Development Plan (SDP).

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 1: Good with outstanding features

62. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
63. During the inspection, standards of achievement in the lessons observed in the six subjects inspected were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
14%	82%	4%	0%	0%

64. In 96 per cent of lessons, pupils' standards of achievement were judged to be grade 2 or above, which is more than 30 per cent above the Welsh Assembly Government's target for 2007. This consistency in achievement is an outstanding feature of the school.
65. Many children enter the reception class with below average attainment and a significant number of them have poor language skills. All pupils make good, and often outstanding progress as they move through the school, regardless of their background. They achieve good and very good standards in their knowledge, understanding and skills by the end of key stage 2.
66. Pupils with additional learning needs, including those with SEN, make good progress and achieve well relative to their abilities. They cope well in classes and with the work they are given.
67. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire reported that they agree, or strongly agree, that they are happy with pupils' progress and the standards they achieve.
68. 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.
69. In the early years, overall standards in the six areas of learning are:

Areas of Learning for Under-fives

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

70. Children under five make good progress and achieve good standards with no important shortcomings in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and in their use of numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) through their activities in all six areas of learning. Their bilingual skills are developing well.

71. In key stages 1 and 2, overall standards in the subjects inspected are:

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
English	2	2
Science	2	1
Information Technology	1	1
Art	2	2
Physical Education	2	2

72. All pupils make good progress and achieve good standards in using the key skills of speaking and reading in their work across the curriculum. They gradually develop confidence in discussing their ideas and expressing their opinions in class. However, they are sometimes less confident in speaking in more formal contexts to a larger audience. They use their reading skills well to access information for their work in subjects such as history and science.

73. Pupils' progress and achievement in the other key skills of listening and writing, and in their use of numeracy and ICT, are outstanding. They listen very attentively in lessons because their teachers make learning so interesting. They apply the skills they acquire in English lessons very well in their writing for a wide variety of purposes in other subjects. The standard of presentation of their work in all subjects is consistently high and another outstanding feature.

74. Pupils of all abilities use their numeracy skills confidently in subjects such as geography and science, for example, to measure accurately and display information in graphs and bar charts. Throughout the school, pupils use an extensive range of ICT tools and information sources to obtain, prepare, process and present information in their work in every subject. Their confidence and skill in using this technology is impressive.

75. Pupils use the Welsh language in a variety of contexts, but their bilingual competence in key stages 1 and 2 is limited as they do not progressively communicate and move confidently and easily from speaking Welsh to English and vice-versa.

76. In key stage 1, pupils' performance in the 2005 National Curriculum assessments was well above the average of other schools in the Local Education Authority (LEA), and in Wales, in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. One hundred per cent of pupils attained the expected Level 2 in all three subjects and there was no marked difference in the performance of girls and boys. The number of pupils attaining the higher

Level 3 was also much higher than both local and national averages. These results place the school in the top 25 per cent of schools that have a similar socio-economic profile (over 47 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals).

77. In key stage 2, pupils' performance in the 2005 National Curriculum assessments was also well above the average of other schools, both locally and nationally, in all three core subjects. Over 92 per cent of pupils achieved the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science, in comparison with the national figure of 72 per in Wales as a whole. Girls achieved slightly better than boys in English and mathematics, but there was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in science, where 100 per cent of pupils achieved Level 4. The number of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 also greatly exceeded local and national averages. Again the school's excellent performance places it in the top 25 per cent when compared with similar schools.
78. In both key stages, pupils' attainment in all three core subjects over the last three years shows continuous improvement in comparison with LEA and national averages, even taking into account occasional dips in performance due to the changing nature of each year group of pupils. Their performance consistently exceeds that of both the LEA and Wales. This pattern is particularly marked in relation to the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in key stage 1 and Level 5 in key stage 2. Over the last three years, girls have performed slightly better than boys in English in both key stages. In mathematics, there has been little difference in the performance of girls and boys in key stage 1, but girls have performed slightly better than boys in key stage 2. Girls and boys have performed equally well in science.
79. Pupils make very good progress in developing and applying new knowledge, understanding and skills in their work in all subjects under the guidance of their teachers, but are sometimes less confident in using their knowledge and skills to learn independently. Although they have begun to evaluate their own work and are sometimes aware of their targets, at other times pupils are unclear about how they can further improve.
80. Pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress towards fulfilling their potential and moving on to the next stage of learning. In many lessons they complete a considerable amount of work in the time available and thoroughly enjoy the challenges offered to them. Gifted mathematicians in years 4, 5 and 6, for example, thrive on the challenges offered to them in the GCSE mathematics class taught by the head teacher. Five pupils in last year's year 6 achieved a Grade C at GCSE and eleven others gained a pass grade.¹
81. Pupils' attitudes towards learning are consistently very good. They have an exceptional ability to settle down to work very quickly and they concentrate and engage positively in the learning process. This contributes significantly to

¹ GCSE examinations are actually designed for 16 year olds.

the high standards they achieve in their work. They answer questions in class readily and try hard in all lessons. They move around the school in a calm way and discuss with enthusiasm their enjoyment of many aspects of school life.

82. Pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and outside at play is good with no important shortcomings. Older pupils are good role models for those younger than themselves. The good behaviour of pupils has a positive impact on their standards of achievement. The school has a good deal of success with the implementation of well thought out programmes for pupils who have been identified as having behavioural difficulties. As a result, their behaviour does not impede their learning or that of their classmates. There is minimal evidence of bullying or oppressive behaviour and the pupils spoken to during the inspection say that bullying is rare.
83. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and unauthorised absence has been reduced. However, despite the school's efforts, overall levels of attendance are below the Wales and LEA average due to the number of unauthorised absences. Punctuality at the start of the day is good with no important shortcomings. The school takes suitable account of the Welsh Assembly Government circular 3/99.
84. Pupils work very well under the direction of their teachers, in pairs and in groups. They have developed some very useful skills, for instance, in literacy, numeracy and ICT, which sustain their interest in the next stage of learning and beyond. They enjoy opportunities to work individually or co-operatively to solve problems they are given.
85. All pupils make very good progress in their personal and social skills. The quality of relationships between all members of the school community is very good. Pupils are friendly, polite and happy to talk to visitors.
86. There is a clear commitment to equal opportunity for all both in policy and practice. Pupils respond well to the positive atmosphere and clear expectations for behaviour and show respect for others and their views. They have a developing appreciation of the diversity of beliefs and cultural traditions.
87. Visits to places of educational interest, and visitors to school, help pupils to develop a good understanding of their place in the wider community and of the working world.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

88. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
89. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
30%	64%	6%	0%	0%

90. Nearly 94 per cent of lessons were judged to be grade 2 or above, which is over 20 per cent higher than the national picture reported by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in her most recent report. No lessons received a grade 4 or 5, which is, again, much better than the national picture. The overall quality of teaching has risen markedly since the last inspection.
91. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is characterised by high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers very effectively stimulate and challenge pupils to achieve their full potential. The use of learning resources is an outstanding feature of their teaching. In every class, interesting objects, visual aids and equipment are used highly successfully to stimulate pupils' curiosity and to sustain their interest and attention.
92. Teachers maintain a brisk pace in lessons and employ a wide range of teaching skills that help to maximise pupils' learning. They are also expert at exploiting the full potential of the interactive whiteboard to support, enhance and reinforce pupils' learning. This is another outstanding feature of the quality of teaching.
93. Relationships between pupils and teachers are extremely good and are a key factor in motivating pupils to learn. Many lessons make learning fun and practical activities are very well organised. Teachers manage groups effectively, and in key stage 2 they assign different roles to individual pupils within these in order to develop their confidence and their social skills.
94. Teachers demonstrate very secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. They also have a very good understanding of how children learn and are very skilled at catering for different learning styles. Questioning is very effective and teachers challenge pupils to think and solve problems themselves.
95. The quality of planning is very good and builds successfully on what has gone before. All lessons have clear objectives, which are shared with pupils at the outset, so that they know what they are expected to do and to achieve.

96. Teachers often give very skilled demonstrations, for example, in science lessons, which pupils really enjoy and which help them understand the concepts involved. However, in most classes teachers do not often provide opportunities for pupils independently to plan and set up their own investigations in science and other subjects.
97. Throughout the school, additional adults are deployed effectively to support pupils' learning. In the early years, planning for the nursery nurse, parents and students to support practical activities is good. Planning for them to enhance and support the quality of children's imaginative play is, however, less well developed.
98. Teachers treat pupils equally, consistently and fairly and they all enjoy equal access to everything the school offers. They adapt tasks effectively for pupils with SEN, thus enabling them to participate fully in lessons.
99. In the early years, the use of incidental Welsh effectively promotes children's developing bilingual skills. In key stages 1 and 2, due attention is paid to the promotion of bilingual competence, with some incidental use of Welsh in all classes. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities consistently to promote pupils' bilingual skills in subjects across the curriculum.
100. Teachers know their pupils very well and cater appropriately for the learning needs of all abilities. They successfully secure the full participation of all pupils and regularly monitor and review their progress.
101. The overall quality of assessment and recording is good. A whole-school system of assessment tracks pupils' progress over time. Teachers make good use of standardised tests to assess pupils' progress and use the information gained to focus on pupils' learning needs. They effectively analyse test results to plan future work and raise standards.
102. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and there are some good examples of appropriate guidance on how pupils can improve their work, but this is not consistent throughout the school. Subject portfolios have been compiled in National Curriculum subjects. These provide useful exemplar ideas and work in line with National Curriculum levels. More able pupils have the opportunity of gaining a GCSE qualification in mathematics.
103. Teachers check with pupils at the end of lessons whether or not they have fully understood the content. Pupils are thus generally aware of the steps they are taking in their learning. However, pupils' involvement with their teachers in setting and reviewing precise targets to improve their own learning is not yet fully developed consistently throughout the school.
104. Annual reports to parents about their children's progress conform to statutory requirements and are of good quality. They contain evaluative comments on pupils' achievements and skills in every subject. Reports also outline clear targets for improvement.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

105. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report because although there are two or three shortcomings in the provision, there are also outstanding features in important areas.
106. The school responds very well to pupils' learning needs and provides equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum is stimulating and enriched by many relevant practical experiences. The head teacher and his colleagues have worked very hard since the last inspection to implement a full curriculum in all subjects.
107. The school's documentation and schemes of work are good overall, and some are outstanding. They ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of their pupils. A particular strength is the breadth of the curriculum where schemes indicate, as in physical education, a wide range of very relevant experiences, which pupils may not otherwise enjoy.
108. Grouping arrangements in key stage 2 are highly effective in helping pupils of all abilities to achieve their potential. The provision for pupils who are talented mathematicians is outstanding and a unique feature of the school.
109. In the early years, detailed planning ensures full coverage of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning and children enjoy a good range of relevant experiences. The provision for imaginative play both inside and outside the classroom is, however, less well developed.
110. The overall provision for pupils to develop and apply their key skills of speaking and reading in their work across the curriculum is good. The opportunities planned and provided for pupils to use their developing skills in writing, numeracy and ICT, however, are outstanding. The school has received recognition from the Basic Skills Agency for its work.
111. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Lunchtime and afternoon clubs such as football, netball, dance and ICT complement very well the curriculum offered in classes. Experiences such as residential visits make a very good contribution to their personal and social development.
112. The school's provision for personal and social education (PSE) is outstanding, permeates all areas of the curriculum and contributes significantly to the quality of learning in class.
113. Learning experiences also successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. One of the strengths of the provision is the progress pupils make, throughout the school, in their social development. There are very good relationships between all members of the school

community. Staff provide very good role models and pupils are encouraged to be thoughtful and supportive of each other.

114. Pupils' moral and cultural development is good. In the early years, stories such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' are used effectively to promote children's understanding of the difference between right and wrong. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils are developing a good idea of right and wrong through their work in history, geography and religious education. There are also many opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of their own cultural traditions and those of others. A good range of visits and visitors makes a significant contribution to their cultural development.
115. Overall, collective worship makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their spiritual awareness generally develops well, with all members of the school community demonstrating attentive concern for each other. On some occasions, however, opportunities are missed to give pupils time to reflect on issues and experiences.
116. The school's partnership with parents, other providers and interested parties is good. There is good open communication with parents and ninety percent of them attend the three open evenings a year, where they can discuss their child's progress. Parents are welcomed into the school and encouraged to become part of its life and work. Many are involved in fund raising for the school. A number provide regular help in class and with educational visits. The school makes further efforts to involve parents in their children's education by offering literacy and numeracy classes.
117. The partnership with the local community is good. There is a good range of visits to places of interest in the locality. There are good cultural links with the community, including people who work at Tower Colliery and some senior citizens who visit the school to talk about the Second World War. Links with a number of secondary schools are developing, and the Comenius project has enhanced links with schools both here and abroad. However, there are no curriculum links to aid pupils' transfer from one stage of learning to the next. The school works effectively in partnership with initial teacher training institutions and regularly provides training for students undertaking vocational qualifications at Merthyr and Aberdare Colleges.
118. The curriculum fully meets the statutory requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government.
119. An appropriate number of opportunities have been provided for pupils to take part in visits to local commerce and business in order to learn about the working world, but these tend to be planned on an ad hoc basis.
120. *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig*, the Welsh dimension in the curriculum, features prominently in the whole life and work of the school. Opportunities are provided in subjects across the curriculum to raise pupils' awareness of the culture of Wales but pupils' bilingual skills are under developed.

121. The school shows a clear commitment to equal opportunity for all and there are many outstanding qualities evident in the school's attitude to combating social disadvantage. A commitment to full inclusion in all areas of the curriculum for pupils of all abilities is shown through good planning.
122. The school is at an early stage of promoting sustainable development and global citizenship in a practical way in the everyday life of the school. There is a recently formed Eco Committee and pupils have many ideas for improving the school environment and acting in a sustainable way. They are aware of environmental issues from their work in geography and PSE and knowledgeably discuss areas for improvement that the school, community and the wider world could take.
123. Opportunities for staff to take part in placements within business and industry have occurred in the past and have aided the development of management styles within the school. However, these opportunities are not regularly provided and do not form part of the school's formal professional development programme.
124. The provision to develop pupils' entrepreneurial skills is good and is progressing well. Opportunities throughout the school for pupils to develop their problem solving skills are good. The School Watch and Eco Committee help pupils to become involved in the school's decision-making processes.
125. The school successfully promotes pupils' life long learning skills. Pupils take pride in undertaking responsibilities and duties for their teachers. They are beginning to take responsibility for improving their own learning through the targets that are set for them by their teachers. However, there is inconsistent practice between classes in the extent to which pupils are involved in this process. On a pastoral level, transition links with the local secondary schools are good and ensure that pupils' move to the next stage of education is smooth.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

126. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
127. The school plans and manages care and support arrangements very well. The head teacher makes a significant contribution to this aspect of the school's work. He leads by example, showing care and compassion for both pupils and their families to ensure everyone's health and wellbeing. As a result of these good arrangements, several pupils who have been unhappy at other schools have settled very well at Hirwaun Primary School.
128. The school works well with parents and carers. They are consulted about the care and support needed for their children. There are good links and liaison

with a wide range of specialist agencies, and pupils benefit from a good level of support when required. Parents are confident that the school takes good care of their children.

129. Arrangements to help children settle into the reception class are well organised. Parents are encouraged to be fully involved in this process. Arrangements to ensure pupils settle into school life at a later stage are also good. Pupils who have recently joined the school say they have been made to feel welcome and have made new friends.
130. Systems to monitor and address any concerns relating to pupils' behaviour are an outstanding feature of the school's work. Pupils who experience difficulty controlling their behaviour are very well supported through a range of very appropriate strategies. This provision also extends to working with families to ensure there is a consistent approach to any problem. As a result of this very good practice, several pupils who were excluded from other schools have successfully remained at Hirwaun Primary School to complete the first stage of their education.
131. Arrangements to raise the profile of the need for regular attendance and punctuality and to monitor this aspect are good with outstanding features. Systems are clear and consistently followed. There is good liaison with the Educational Welfare Officer. Overall attendance levels have improved as a result of these very good arrangements.
132. Pupils' academic performance is monitored closely. However, the information gained is not always consistently used in all classes to ensure that pupils understand how to improve their learning.
133. There are clear policies and procedures to ensure everyone's health, safety and welfare. The health and safety concerns raised at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed. Suitable risk assessments are regularly carried out. Child protection procedures are secure, well documented and known to all who work in the school. All staff have received appropriate training which is regularly updated.
134. Overall, the provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good and meets the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice for Wales. Pupils are very well included in the life and work of the school. Pupils with SEN are positively welcomed into the school and a number of late entrants from other schools make good progress.
135. Pupils' needs are identified early and the school works positively to involve pupils and parents in their individual learning programmes. The educational psychologist is fully involved in providing further assessment as needed. The school reports that the speech therapy offered is not effectively used as parents are often unable to attend the health clinic.
136. The teaching arrangements for pupils in key stage 2 are a strength of the school's provision, with daily lessons in English and mathematics. Pupils with

additional learning needs make good progress in these sessions and benefit from a well-developed curriculum, closely linked to their classroom work. Pupils enjoy these sessions, respond positively to the differentiated curriculum and achieve well in line with age and ability.

137. Pupils with SEN make good progress towards the targets set for them in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Overall, the individual programmes provided for these pupils are of good quality, with specific targets and measurable outcomes. Class teachers know their pupils well and are fully involved in the planning and delivery of the programmes. At times, however, the targets set are over ambitious in the number to be achieved in the time allowed. SEN non-teaching and teaching support for key stage 1 pupils is limited, but effective when it occurs.
138. The provision for pupils' personal support and guidance is outstanding. The school successfully fulfils its aim to provide stability within the school for pupils who may be experiencing difficulties in their home lives. The day-to-day care and guidance for pupils is of a very high quality and a particularly notable feature of the school's work. Great emphasis is placed on raising pupils' self esteem and confidence. Pupils confirm that they trust adults and would turn to them for help if required. PSE is extremely well planned throughout the school and suitable attention is given to sex education and substance misuse. The school is also involved in initiatives to develop healthy lifestyles, as well as the Dragon Sport programme.
139. The school has a clear policy for equal opportunities and racial equality. Suitable account is taken of pupils' social and ethnic backgrounds, so that all pupils are very well supported and guided. Boys and girls are given the same opportunities to participate in all school activities. The diversity of other faiths, cultures and values is promoted well throughout the school but sometimes opportunities to prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society are missed.
140. Arrangements to eliminate bullying and any form of harassment are good and pupils express confidence in the school's systems.
141. The school building is accessible for disabled pupils and adults. Measures are in place to ensure no one is disadvantaged because of their disability. There is a suitable accessibility plan in place.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

142. The findings of the inspection team differ from the judgement of grade 2 made by the school in its self-evaluation report. This is because the quality of leadership at all levels has been outstanding, not merely good, in bringing about school improvement.
143. On his appointment to the school just over a year after the last inspection, the head teacher quickly identified key changes that were needed to improve the quality of the provision and raise the standards that pupils were then achieving. However, he managed change at a pace with which staff were comfortable. His leadership has been outstanding, and crucial, in bringing about the desired changes.
144. Staff were, themselves, keen to improve the quality of the education offered. With the help of the clear sense of direction provided by the head teacher, they have been outstandingly successful in working as a team with a shared sense of purpose to develop their teaching skills and raise standards. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and are justifiably proud of their school and of the progress they have made over the last five years.
145. The aims of the school are revisited once a year during a closure day that involves all staff, including non-teaching staff, and those members of the governing body who can attend. This day gives everyone the opportunity to reflect critically on the school's aims and enables them to feel fully involved in setting the school's strategic direction.
146. The school takes good account of the Welsh Assembly Government's national priorities. It participates in the local cluster group of schools and liaises with a social worker to promote social inclusion as pupils transfer to secondary school. It also has a strong relationship with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, accommodates their toy library and works with them to help develop parenting skills.
147. The head teacher and staff with management responsibilities are very effective in setting and agreeing challenging but realistic targets for improvement. Core subject leaders monitor the performance of all teachers in teaching the subject for which they are responsible once a year. Foundation subject leaders monitor the teaching of their subjects throughout the school every two years. Subject leaders also monitor the quality of teachers' planning and ensure coverage of the scheme of work through the school Intranet.

148. Target setting for pupils takes account of their previous performance, but allows for challenge. Pupils work with teachers to set their own targets but do not always readily recall them.
149. Staff appraisal procedures are very effective. Using the 'Celebrate Refine Improve Support' model for staff development, they effectively identify and agree areas for development. Individual teachers also have the opportunity to request training in those areas where they wish to develop their confidence. Staff development has been a key ingredient in the drive to improve standards and quality.
150. Both the head teacher and deputy head teacher have received IT training from the New Opportunities Fund. This training has had an outstanding impact both in boosting teachers' confidence in teaching and using ICT and on pupils' standards of achievement in the subject.
151. The head teacher keeps the governing body well informed about the school's performance, as do annual reviews by members of staff with management responsibilities. Individual governors regularly meet those members of staff with whom they are linked. They report back to the full governing body on developments in the areas and subjects in which they take a particular interest. This enables governors to contribute to discussions concerning the school's strategic direction.
152. A number of governors are actively involved, or work, in the school so that they have a good picture of the quality of its provision. They often see samples of pupils' work. They contribute to the school's self-evaluation process and have a good understanding of the school's priorities for development. The chair of governors, in particular, is a good critical friend of the school and is very aware of the progress that was needed, and that has been made, since the last inspection.
153. In almost every area of its work, the governing body fulfils the legal duties placed upon it. The governors' annual report to parents meets legal requirements but the school prospectus has minor omissions in the information it should contain.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

154. The findings of the inspection team differ from the judgement of grade 2 made by the school in its self-evaluation report. The team judged that self-evaluation procedures are outstanding in effectively identifying and addressing areas for improvement, and not just good, as assessed by the school.
155. A culture of systematic self-evaluation has been established for some time, where all stakeholders' views are taken into account. Leaders and managers

gather first-hand evidence of the performance of those areas for which they are responsible through regular monitoring exercises. They also use information from measurable performance data to augment their knowledge and understanding of how well the school is performing. They use the information gathered from a variety of sources highly effectively to identify and address aspects for improvement.

156. Governors receive reports from subject leaders and are thus enabled to contribute to the process of further planning for improvement. Parents' views are taken into account through questionnaires and pupils' views are also sought on a range of relevant issues.
157. A school training day is set aside once a year to evaluate the school's performance in all aspects of its work. All staff, including support and lunchtime staff and those governors who are able to attend, contribute to the discussion about how well the school is performing. The school's self-evaluation process is outstanding in identifying, prioritising and addressing key areas for improvement.
158. The school's self-evaluation document, based on a wide range of evidence, offers relevant information on all aspects of school life. The document identifies strengths and weaknesses but needs to be sharper, concentrated and more detailed. The weaknesses identified in the self-evaluation document feed into the School Development Plan (SDP) as priorities for action.
159. The SDP is a clear and purposeful document, which moves the school forward, in the short and long term. The planning process involves all staff, ensuring a shared understanding of the direction of the school. Teachers identify priorities and their training needs are determined from this. The plan includes targets or success criteria for all the priorities and an appropriate allocation of resources.
160. Standards of achievement have improved year on year since 2001. The Investors in People process has been used to good effect in driving forward the school improvement agenda. The school makes very good use of data analysis from standardised tests and teacher assessments to inform the planning of teaching and learning programmes and to bring about improvement. The head teacher, staff and governing body all show a clear commitment to high standards.
161. In most respects, the inspection team agreed with the school's identification of its strengths and areas for improvement. The inspection team agreed with the judgements made by the school in five of the seven key questions. Where there was a difference in judgement, the inspection team awarded higher grades in two key questions. The discrepancy is due to the school's underestimation of the impact of its strategies to improve standards.
162. Progress since the last inspection in 1999 has been outstanding and all the key issues identified then have been addressed very successfully.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

163. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
164. The school is appropriately staffed with qualified and experienced teachers who have the necessary knowledge to teach all aspects of the National Curriculum. Some classes are large, but the arrangements made for literacy and numeracy alleviate this in the morning sessions.
165. Job descriptions are in place for all teaching and non-teaching staff and are updated regularly. The roles of teachers with responsibilities are well developed. For instance, the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) has undertaken training to develop her knowledge and understanding of SEN and this been effectively used to improve the progress that these pupils make. When support staff are deployed to support pupils with SEN they work effectively with class teachers and make a very good contribution to pupils' progress.
166. The school administrator works efficiently and effectively to ensure that the day-to-day running of the school functions smoothly. The school is well served by its caretaker and ancillary staff.
167. Performance management reviews identify teachers' training needs very well and recognise roles of responsibility. They are closely linked to the SDP. Since the last inspection much training has been undertaken, often in teachers' own time, which has had a significant impact not only on their confidence, but also on the standard of teaching across the curriculum.
168. Overall, the school has a very good stock of learning resources that are used very effectively to enhance pupils' learning experiences. The considerable investment in ICT, including whiteboards in every classroom, and a good number of computers and other technology, has had an outstanding impact on pupils' progress not only in learning and standards of achievement in information technology but also on all subjects across the curriculum. The library is well used and has a good stock of appropriate books.
169. The overall quality of the infant and junior buildings is good and provides bright spacious classrooms, particularly in the infant building, where appropriate space has now been created to deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum in the future. Good use of space has resulted in a well-equipped ICT room and a library, as well as useful accommodation for SEN work. However, there is no covered walkway to aid the comfort of pupils and staff when travelling between the two buildings in all weathers.
170. Displays around the school are of good quality, celebrating pupils' achievements and providing colourful examples of their work in all subjects. The building is kept clean and tidy with all curriculum resources methodically

organised. The security of the building and access for disabled adults and pupils are good.

171. The site is spacious and the hard standing areas are used regularly for physical education. The grassed field is often too wet and boggy to be used for games and football and other matches have to be held at a nearby facility. Although benches are situated in the playground, this area has not yet been used further to develop pupils' awareness of their environment.
172. Subject leaders regularly review, audit and make informed decisions to purchase resources. These are carefully costed and matched to priorities set out in the SDP. Major purchases are carefully scrutinised by the governing body and their effectiveness reported on by the head teacher and through the curriculum.
173. The school provides very good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Under 5s

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

Good features

Language, literacy and communication skills

175. Many children have poor language skills and a limited vocabulary on entry to the reception class, but make good progress in gradually developing their confidence in speaking. They are keen to offer comments on illustrations and events in stories read to them by their teacher. They increasingly listen with attention and follow instructions and directions well. They understand and respond appropriately to simple commands in Welsh. They have a positive attitude to books and really enjoy listening to stories, joining in with actions and refrains. More able children are beginning to read and recognise some familiar words. All children know how to handle a book, enjoy retelling the story and are developing a good knowledge of letters and sounds. They understand that writing records and communicates information and, with support, write simple captions for books they make. They enjoy practising writing their names and make good progress in becoming independent writers.

Personal and social development

176. Children are developing good relationships with one another and with adults and are secure in their environment. They adjust well to class routines and show a good disposition for learning. They are learning to take turns and how to play simple games with rules. They concentrate well when engaged in tasks they have chosen themselves and competently tidy up at the end of sessions. They eagerly respond to new learning experiences. Children generally show good self-control and an awareness of what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour. They respond positively to new cultural experiences and are beginning to appreciate special times of the year in other cultures, such as Chinese New Year.

Mathematical development

177. Most children can count up to 10, recognise, say and use numbers in the correct sequence and recall familiar counting songs. More able children recognise and name numbers up to 30. They use their developing counting skills in a variety of situations and are beginning to understand the concepts of 'less than' and 'more than' in relevant contexts. Most of them name a

number of shapes and colours. They recognise patterns and can copy them. Some children recognise and make more complex symmetrical patterns. They sort familiar objects according to properties such as 'thick' and 'thin' and their use of mathematical vocabulary is developing well.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

178. Children are developing a good understanding of the main features of the seasons. For example, they carefully observe and discuss changes in a tree outside their classroom during the autumn. They show good awareness of the need to dress appropriately for different kinds of weather. Their understanding of the needs of plants and animals is developing well through activities such as planting bulbs and looking after the class hamster. They are beginning to develop a concept of time and to differentiate between the past and present in their own lives. Their knowledge and understanding of their homes and where they live is extended through their walks and observations in Hirwaun village. They understand the use of a variety of information and communications technology, and the confidence and skill they display in using computers and remote control devices is very good.

Physical development

179. Children are beginning to develop an understanding of the importance of a healthy diet. They understand that they change as they grow and that their needs vary according to their age. They make good progress in developing their fine motor skills through a variety of activities such as threading, mark making, cutting and sticking and printing with small objects. They enjoy exploring ways of moving using different parts of their body. They are developing good physical control by practising balancing and making shapes with their bodies. Their co-ordination is developing well through throwing and catching practice with beanbags and balls.

Creative development

180. Children observe and appreciate the work of artists such as Matisse. They enjoy mixing colours using paint and oil pastels and produce pictures that are individual, but inspired by Matisse's work. They enjoy exploring colour and create attractive collages using a wide variety of objects and materials including feathers, pasta, fabric and glitter. They make faces from clay which, with support, show good attention to details of hair, eyes and noses. They are familiar with the names and sounds of a range of musical instruments and respond enthusiastically to opportunities to make music. They enjoy singing songs in English and Welsh, and their developing sense of rhythm is evident as they clap and move in time to the music.

Shortcomings

181. Children have an insecure understanding of the differences between town and country.

182. Children's capacity for imaginative role-play, both in the classroom and outside, is limited.

English

Key Stage 1: Grade 2 - good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 2 - good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

183. Pupils in both key stages make good, and sometimes very good, progress in their literacy skills, often from a low baseline.
184. Pupils in both key stages listen attentively to their teachers and other pupils. They listen very well to each other when working in groups or pairs. In key stage 1 they listen carefully to stories and answer questions thoughtfully. Pupils of all abilities, for instance, demonstrate good understanding of the story *A Rumble in the Jungle*.
185. Pupils answer confidently in class, speak in a variety of contexts and are keen to answer teachers' questions. Younger key stage 2 pupils offer good ideas when suggesting how to write books for younger pupils. When answering questions, the most able pupils speak very clearly using appropriate vocabulary and explaining themselves fully.
186. Standards in reading are good in both key stages. In key stage 1, pupils read accurately and with reasonable fluency, using a range of reading strategies to try and help them understand the text. Some younger pupils accurately identify grammatical conventions such as speech marks or question marks.
187. In key stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress with reading, often making good use of their skills across the curriculum. They enjoy reading and more able pupils thoughtfully discuss their choices, the characters and the plot in their fiction books. They confidently use more advanced reading skills, such as scanning to look for information in books in history and on the Internet. More able pupils read aloud from a variety of texts, fluently using good expression and understanding.
188. Pupils are making good progress with their comprehension skills. In their work on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, more able pupils in year 6 explain the plot well. They demonstrate good understanding of many aspects of the story and the characters in it. Less able pupils also demonstrate good awareness of some of the main characters.
189. Pupils often make very good progress in their writing. They write for a variety of purposes using a range of styles to produce good examples of letters, poems, newspaper articles, stories and other forms of narrative. Key stage 1 pupils write a good number of interesting adjectives to describe animals in the jungle. The more able write in sentences with appropriate punctuation.

190. Older key stage 2 pupils produce a range of writing that is varied in content, well structured and of good quality. For example, in their adventure stories, the more able write very well at length using a range of adjectives when writing about the characters in their stories. They write play scripts of the story of *Esio Trot* structuring their work well and using a good range of vocabulary.
191. Standards in spelling are good. Pupils use appropriate strategies for spelling words and make good use of dictionaries.
192. The standard of pupils' handwriting is excellent across both key stages. Pupils write easily, in a legible script and take great pride in the presentation of their work.
193. Pupils use their word-processing skills very effectively in English to make first drafts, edit and make best copies of their work.

Shortcomings

194. In both formal and informal situations, some pupils' speech is indistinct and they often do not speak fluently or at length.
195. More able pupils in key stage 1 do not read more extended texts and many pupils in key stage 2 lack expression when reading aloud.

Science

Key Stage 1: Grade 2 - good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 1 - good with outstanding features

Good features

196. Throughout the school, an outstanding feature of their work is that pupils of all abilities apply their literacy and numeracy skills very well in scientific investigations and record their findings clearly, in a wide variety of forms.
197. In key stage 1, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of their work in science. Their investigational skills are also developing well.
198. Pupils in year 1 talk knowledgeably about an experiment to find out which materials keep the water out best and more able pupils use the term 'waterproof' appropriately. They are starting to understand the importance of doing the same thing each time to keep a test fair.
199. By year 2, pupils have a good knowledge of different materials such as fabric, metal, plastic and wood and can distinguish between those that are natural and others that are man made. They know that objects that are plugged in use electricity and that they can save energy by switching off the electricity.

They can predict if a circuit will work, and more able pupils can explain about batteries and know how to connect wires to make a circuit.

200. Pupils in lower key stage 2 follow teachers' directions well in order to conduct an investigation and draw sensible conclusions from their observations.
201. Pupils in year 3 have a good understanding of the connection between diet and health. For example, they know which foods are, and are not, good for their teeth.
202. By year 4 they know the difference between solids, liquids and gases and have developed a good understanding of a fair test of solubility. They make plausible predictions about the behaviour of different quantities of salt in water and display a good understanding of terms such as 'solution' and 'soluble'.
203. In year 5, pupils use their observation and measuring skills very well to help them consolidate their understanding of the changes that occur as a result of chemical reactions.
204. By the end of key stage 2, pupils have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their work in science, some of which comes from the key stage 3 programme of study. They use relevant scientific vocabulary appropriately when discussing their investigations and give valid reasons for the predictions they make. They have a very good understanding of how to plan an experiment using suitable apparatus, and of controlling variables in order to make a fair test.

Shortcomings

205. Pupils in key stage 1 sometimes have difficulty in explaining what they have found out, drawing on their scientific knowledge and understanding.

Information technology

Key Stage 1: Grade 1 - good with outstanding features

Key Stage 2: Grade 1 - good with outstanding features

Good and outstanding features

206. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate positive attitudes to this subject. Their skills are very well developed across both key stages with pupils of all abilities confidently and competently using computers, interactive white boards, digital cameras, video cameras and other technology. One of the outstanding features of pupils' work is their ability to work quickly and easily in all their uses of technology.
207. In key stage 1, pupils have developed a number of basic skills such as executing program commands, saving their work and using the mouse and

pointer. They also operate a number of facilities on the tool bars, such as changing font and text.

208. Year 2 pupils have well developed word-processing skills. They edit, print and save their work confidently. They word process their poems on 'The Seaside' and demonstrate good knowledge of the position of keys on the keyboard.
209. Key stage 1 pupils create and present information on the locality, photographing features and incorporating text. With some support, they produce Power Point presentations of good quality. They make good use of the digital camera to record their work and use the Internet proficiently.
210. In key stage 2, pupils make very good progress. They improve their IT capability in their word processed writing by using a range of fonts, styles and other features from the drop down bar. When producing a range of books for infant children, younger key stage 2 pupils easily incorporate pictures from the Internet in their text. They use many features on the windows programs competently, highlight, edit, cut and paste and produce well-created and illustrated stories. They have well developed keyboard skills, ensuring that they input text quickly.
211. In this key stage, they continue to improve their research skills, with pupils presenting their findings using a Power Point presentation on a variety of topics. Younger pupils in key stage 2 demonstrate good use of their research on Tudors and Stuarts to produce interesting work to display on the interactive whiteboard. They use the video recorder very purposefully to note facts in their research into the lives of queens Elizabeth I and II.
212. As part of their geographical work in another area of Wales, they develop and make use of their link with a school in Llanarthne. They correspond with the school, e-mailing attachments with information about their locality. Pupils with SEN use software such as 'Publisher' well to write recipes and illustrate their work.
213. More able pupils in upper key stage 2 have a very good understanding of how to use spreadsheets and are aware of their merits in comparison with other packages for data work. They know how to format cells in a spreadsheet and how to automate the column of figures. They produce a range of different graphical formulae very easily with good understanding of the outcomes in their mathematics work on the percentage of profit and loss.

Shortcomings

214. There are no important shortcomings.

Art

Key Stage 1: Grade 2 - good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 2 - good features and no important shortcomings

Good Features

215. In both key stages, pupils are developing good knowledge and understanding of artists and designers in a range of media and from different cultures and contexts, including Welsh artists. For example, in year 4, pupils are developing good skills in using pattern and shape in the style of the Australian Aborigine painter, Jimmy Pike.
216. In key stage 1, pupils make good use of a wide range of equipment, materials and techniques to create paintings, prints and collages. They show a good sense of proportion in drawing faces as part of their self-portrait paintings. Pupils experiment well with a range of media to be used before embarking on art week topics.
217. Pupils in key stage 1 demonstrate good knowledge of colour tones, which they use to very good effect to produce examples in the style of Matisse and Monet.
218. Key stage 2 pupils paint in the style of famous artists such as Picasso, Van Gogh, Cézanne, Warhol and Munch. Examples of the latter's work, *The Scream*, by older key stage 2 pupils, are of a high standard.
219. Throughout the school, pupils use their IT skills extremely well to support and enhance their work in art. For example, year 4 pupils combine the use of a paint program with windows and clipart to produce work in the style of Andy Warhol. They manipulate repeating patterns into different forms very well, changing size and colour and use the paintbrush proficiently.
220. Older pupils' awareness of three-dimensional work develops well as they create a whole range of models as part of the St. David's Day celebrations. They use a range of media to decorate them effectively.
221. Pupils in both key stages work well creatively and collaboratively.

Shortcomings

222. There are no important shortcomings.

Physical education

Key Stage 1: Grade 2 - good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 2 - good features and no important shortcomings

Good Features

223. All pupils change into appropriate clothing to participate in lessons. They are aware of safety issues, such as those arising from wearing jewellery.
224. All pupils at both key stages understand the importance of warming up before, and cooling down after, physical exercise. They work together well in groups and pairs, discussing their work with interest.
225. Younger key stage 1 pupils move with good control, using space very well in their games lessons and demonstrate good body control. They run lightly, and move and dodge with agility. Their throwing and catching skills are developing well, with the more skilled throwing very accurately and adjusting very well to catch the ball. They understand their role in a simple game and follow the rules well.
226. In gymnastics, older key stage 1 pupils discuss and evaluate their performance well. They handle apparatus efficiently with due care and attention. They balance on the apparatus competently. The more able work lightly and neatly when building their sequences of movements.
227. Lower key stage 2 pupils are developing good ball control skills. They practise and refine their high passes and chest passes, propelling the ball accurately with considerable success.
228. Boys and girls in key stage 2 participate in dance with interest, discussing how to develop their work well. They show good spatial awareness and perform choreographed movements, developing the scientific theme with a sense of rhythm, responding well to the stimulus. They know and enjoy taking part in a number of Welsh folk dances.
229. Year 6 pupils develop their skills in rock climbing, abseiling, canoeing and orienteering whilst attending residential visits to an outdoor pursuits centre.
230. The school reports that year 6 pupils make appropriate progress in swimming by the end of the key stage.

Shortcomings

231. With some exceptions, older key stage 1 pupils' movements lack agility and fluency when performing sequences of actions in gymnastics.

School's response to the inspection

The inspection findings recognise the improvements Hirwaun Primary School has made since the last inspection in 1999 and has laid out recommendations to further address the needs of our pupils. We are pleased the inspectors found that staff were committed to school improvement and that pupils had positive attitudes to their learning. In particular the report confirms that we are achieving our aim to make our school a happy and secure place in which pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem.

In addition, the report also recognises the excellent standards of presentation throughout the school, in science and in the use of English across the curriculum an aspect that has improved greatly.

An action plan will be put in place to address the report's recommendations. This will include further improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, updating of schemes of work where necessary, continuing to address the development of independence and consistency in individual target setting.

Where possible the recommendations will be met before the end of the school year. Maintaining standards of achievement in all subjects will be a major priority for us. The recommendations not met immediately will form the basis of the School Development Plan for the next academic year.

A copy of the school's action plan in response to the inspection will be sent to all parents. The governors' annual report to parents will comment on the progress we are making on the inspection recommendations.

Appendix A

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Hirwaun Primary School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Address of school	Glannant Street Hirwaun Aberdare
Postcode	CF44 9NF
Telephone number	01685 811619

Head teacher	Mr A Manley
Date of appointment	1 January 2001
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mrs P Jones
Registered inspector	Ms S James
Dates of inspection	21 - 23 November 2005

Appendix B

School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	N/A	25	22	28	32	33	35	30	205

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	8	2	9

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	20:8.
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	N/A
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	29
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:23

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of School
Autumn 2004	N/A	92%	93%
Spring 2005	N/A	92%	93%
Summer 2005	N/A	92%	92%

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	50%
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 2005			Number of pupils in Y2:					31
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	
English:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	56	44	
		National*		4	13	63	20	
En: reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	56	44	
		National*		3	11	63	23	
En: writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	59	41	
		National*		5	15	69	11	
En: speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	59	41	
		National*		4	14	55	27	
Mathematics	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	63	38	
		National*		2	11	63	24	
Science	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	59	41	
		National*		2	10	65	23	

* 2004 national results, which were the most recent ones available

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English by teacher assessment			
In the school (2005)	100	In Wales (2004)	81

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

National Curriculum Assessment Results
End of Key Stage 2:

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2005			Number of pupils in Y6		36						
Percentage of pupils at each level											
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	34	58
		National*									
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	36	61
		National*									
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	75
		National*									

* 2004 national results, which were the most recent ones available

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and English			
by teacher assessment		by Test	
In the school (2005)	92	In the school	N/A
In Wales (2004)	72	In Wales	N/A

- D Pupils who are excepted under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum
- A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
- F Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
- W Pupils who are working towards level 1

Appendix D

Evidence base of the inspection

Four inspectors spent a total of eight inspector days in the school and met as a team before the inspection. A peer assessor also spent two and a half days in the school. The nominee from the school was the head teacher.

These inspectors visited:

- thirty-three lessons or part lessons;
- all classes;
- acts of collective worship and
- a range of extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team had meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection began;
- senior managers, teachers, support and administrative staff and groups of pupils during the inspection.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- twenty-four responses to a parents' questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection and
- a wide range of pupils' past and current work.

The inspection team held post-inspection meetings with the staff and governors.

Appendix E

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Stephanie James Registered Inspector	Context Summary Recommendations Key Questions 1, 2 and 5 Early Years Science Appendices
Delyth Parris Team Inspector	Key Questions 3 and 7 Contributions to key questions 1 and 4 English Information Technology Physical Education
Peter Roach Team Inspector	Key Question 6 Contributions to key questions 1, 2 and 3 Art
Denise Shields Lay Inspector	Key Question 4 Contributions to key questions 1 and 3

The contractor was:

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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.