

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

**Plas-y-felin Junior School
Lewis Drive
Churchill Park
Caerphilly
CF83 23FT**

School Number: 676/2274

Date of Inspection: 10th–13th January 2005

by

**Mr Peter Mathias
W203/78829**

Date: 14 March 2005

Under Estyn contract number: T/181/04P

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Plas-y-felin Junior 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 Plas-y-felin Junior School took place between 10th and 13th January 2005. An independent team of three inspectors, led by Mr Peter Mathias 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	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

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 this 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.

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Plas-y-felin Junior School with 215 on roll aged from 8 to 11 years is situated in the centre of Caerphilly town school serves the local area which is a mixture of private and public housing. Pupils come from a range of family backgrounds.
2. The school reports that the area from which most pupils are drawn is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. About 35% of pupils are eligible for free school meals; this is above the Unitary Authority (UA) average of 20.8% and the all Wales average of 19% of pupils entitled to free school meals. About 20% of pupils are considered to have some degree of special educational needs (SEN), of whom one has a statement of SEN. All pupils have English as their first language and all are from Welsh backgrounds. Nearly all pupils enter the school in Year 3 from the infant school which shares the same site.
3. The aims of the school emphasise that the school should be a happy, caring place where pupils receive the best possible education and develop well their personal, social and moral characteristics. The school holds the Basic Skills Award and Investors in People Status.

The school's priorities and targets

4. The school's major priorities and targets for 2004/2006 are:
 - to introduce new schemes of work and to raise standards in mathematics;
 - to strengthen the role of curriculum co-ordinators;
 - to improve the impact of homework and strengthen links with parents;
 - to review the teaching of reading;
 - to review the science scheme of work;
 - to review and develop the use of information and communications technology (ICT).
5. The school was last inspected in 1999. Most of the current teaching staff were at the school at the time of that inspection.

Summary

6. Plas-y-felin Junior School is a good school which has made some good progress since the last inspection. The inspection team agreed with all of the judgements made by the school about the standards pupils achieve and with all of the school's judgements about other areas of its work.

Table of grades awarded

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

Standards

7. Overall pupils' standards of achievement in the subjects inspected are as follows:

Pupils' standards of achievement	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	7%	59%	34%	0%	0%

8. The standards achieved in lessons are above the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG's) target of 95% of standards to be at least satisfactory and 50% to be good or better. In KS2, in subjects inspected, standards of achievement were as follows:-

Subjects

Subject	Key Stage 2
English	2
Mathematics	2
Welsh as a 2 nd language	3
ICT	2
History	1
Physical education	2

9. Pupils' standards and progress in the key skills of speaking and listening are good. In writing, standards and progress are high reflecting the emphasis the school is giving to providing more varied opportunities for pupils to write in different styles and for different purposes. Pupils use their skills in numeracy well to measure, calculate and record the information they collect. Pupils are beginning to use ICT confidently for example, to support their work in history.

However, standards of achievement in this key skill are limited because opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to apply these skills more widely. Pupils' use of incidental Welsh and their bilingual competence are also limited because in lessons opportunities to develop their skills of speaking and using Welsh are not always taken up fully. Pupils' personal and creative skills are strong and pupils make good progress in these areas.

10. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress and often reach or exceed the targets set for them.
11. In 2004, results in the end-of-KS2 national tests for 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science were above the Welsh and local averages and close to the all-Wales target of 80-85% of pupils to reach at least the expected level (Level 4). Since 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching at least the expected level in English, mathematics and science has increased significantly.
12. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are good and they are well motivated. They work together willingly. Nearly all pupils work hard and show good levels of concentration. They evaluate their own learning realistically and are anxious to please their teachers. They show respect for the diversity of beliefs, attitudes and traditions of other people.

The quality of education and training

13. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
21%	69%	10%	0%	0%

14. The percentage of good lessons is above the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG's) target of 95% to be satisfactory or better and of 50% of teaching to be good or very good. This is a significant improvement on the good quality of teaching observed at the time of the last inspection.
15. In the best lessons, teachers have very high expectations of their pupils. The tasks are appropriately demanding and teachers plan carefully to ensure that work is well matched to the different abilities in their classes. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and show inventiveness when teaching a topic. Pupils are regularly reminded of what they should aim to accomplish in the lessons and of the time they have to complete their tasks. They treat all pupils fairly and sympathetically.
16. Where teaching has some shortcomings, insufficient time is set aside to review what pupils have learnt. In some lessons, opportunities are missed to promote pupils' use and knowledge of incidental Welsh and to foster pupils' bilingual skills and to develop the skills of ICT.

17. Arrangements to monitor pupils' progress and to use that information to inform teachers' future plans and strategies are rigorous. Pupils are well informed about what they need to do to improve.
18. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It is carefully organised so that pupils build systematically on what they know and can do. It helps raise standards of achievement significantly. It meets legal requirements and reflects the needs of all pupils, including those with SEN, well. Provision for the basic and key skills are generally good. However, opportunities to develop pupils' bilingual skills and their use of ICT are not included sufficiently in teachers' planning.
19. Learning experiences promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, overall, and there are very good opportunities for pupils to take part in out of school clubs and activities. The school is mindful to provide pupils with many very good opportunities to learn about their local area and about life in other parts of the world. However, there is insufficient emphasis in the planned curriculum on the music, art and literature of Wales, i.e. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig. The school successfully encourages pupils to be aware of the need to protect the environment and to conserve natural resources.
20. Pupils' attendance has not improved significantly since the last inspection. In the last academic year, attendance was below the Welsh average of 93%. The school monitors pupils' attendance closely and works constructively with the (UA) to raise attendance. Generally, pupils arrive punctually.
21. Links with parents, the community and with local schools are strong. However, the school prospectus and the annual report to parents lack a range of information.
22. Arrangements for child protection and the health and welfare of pupils are strong. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal and social education and also to eliminate oppressive behaviour including racial discrimination, bullying and all forms of harassment. The school carries out detailed risk assessments and ensures that all pupils have the same learning opportunities as others.

Leadership and management

23. The leadership of the headteacher was a strong feature at the time of the last inspection and it remains so. A particular strength is the close and effective working relationship between the headteacher and other members of the senior management team. There is a very strong sense of purpose which is closely focused on raising standards further and in holding high expectations of all staff. Recent initiatives to improve pupils' performance in the national tests for 11 year olds have been particularly successful. These have resulted in significant improvements in the school's performance compared to similar schools and to schools nationally. There are very well developed arrangements for subject co-ordinators to manage and review progress in their subjects. Teachers work very willingly and constructively together.

24. The governing body is very committed to the school and is kept well informed by the professional staff about the progress the school is making. However, the role of governors as critical friends is under developed. Governors are over reliant on the very good leadership shown by the headteacher. They do not meet all of their legal requirements in the annual Report to Parents and in the School's Prospectus. The school's self evaluation is accurate and closely linked to the school's plans for improvement. The school has made good progress since the last inspection particularly in raising standards in the national tests for 11 year olds and in raising standards in ICT.
25. The overall provision of staffing, accommodation and resources is good. Resources are good in quality and quantity and pupils benefit considerably from the way these are readily available to support teaching and learning. Pupils are very well supported by qualified and experienced teachers. These are very well deployed. However, there are shortcomings in the effective deployment of support staff and in the overall provision of additional non-teaching support in classrooms. Where this support is available it is well organised and effectively used.
26. Resources are well matched to the school's needs. Decisions about spending are closely linked to the School Development Plan (SDP) which is carefully costed and regularly reviewed. Overall, bearing in mind the high quality of teaching and the good quality of leadership and management in the school, the school gives good value for money.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in Welsh across the school and improve pupils' bilingual skills.
 - R2 Review the provision and deployment of support staff in order to provide greater support for teaching in classes.
 - R3 Strengthen the role of the Governing Body.
 - R4 Continue to build on the progress recently made in raising standards of attendance.
 - R5 Address the statutory omissions.
27. 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

28. Overall, the findings of the inspection match the judgements made by the school in its self evaluation report.

Pupils' standards of achievement	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	7%	59%	34%	0%	0%

29. In KS2 in the subjects inspected, the standards of achievement are as follows:

Subject	Key Stage 2
English	2
Welsh second language	3
Mathematics	2
Information technology	2
History	1
Physical education	2

30. Pupils with SEN make very good progress and often meet or exceed the targets set for them. Generally, pupils exceed the targets which are being set by the UA and WAG.
31. Pupils' standards and progress in the key skills of speaking and listening are good. In writing, standards and progress are high, reflecting the emphasis the school is giving to provide many varied opportunities for pupils to write in different styles and purposes. They make very good use of this key skill in different subjects across the curriculum. Pupils use their skills in numeracy well to measure, calculate and record the information they collect. Pupils are beginning to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) confidently, for example, to support their work in history, where they are able to find out information from the Internet and produce well illustrated presentations. However, the standards of achievement in this key skill are limited because opportunities are missed for pupils to apply these skills more widely. Pupils' use of incidental Welsh and their bilingual competence are also limited because in some lessons opportunities to develop their skills in speaking and using Welsh are not taken up fully. Pupils' knowledge of their locality is very good but pupils have limited knowledge of the achievements of Welsh artists, writers and musicians. Pupils' personal and creative skills are strong and they make good progress in these areas.
32. At the end of KS2, in 2004, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science was well above the Welsh and local averages. These results were the

best ever recorded by the school in mathematics and science and very close to the best achievements so far in English. These results were close to the overall Welsh target for 80-85% of pupils to reach at least the expected level, (Level 4).

33. When compared to schools considered broadly similar, these results were well above these similar schools. Since 2000, the percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected level (Level 4+) in English, mathematic and science has increased significantly and is now much higher than it was. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 5) in this period has increased in all these subjects and particularly in English and science where results have more than doubled over this time.
34. In 2004, the girls attained better than the boys in English and boys out performed girls in mathematics and science. This pattern has been consistent for some time.
35. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning, the interest they show in their work and their ability to sustain concentration are good. The school functions well as a supportive, happy and orderly community. The standard of achievement of most pupils is effectively raised through this positive management of behaviour. They co-operate with staff and fellow pupils and settle quickly to tasks with concentrated effort. However, a minority of pupils find it difficult to listen and concentrate for any length of time. They become restless, lose interest and are demanding of teachers' attention. Teachers work diligently with these pupils to promote understanding of rules and conventions but the flow and pace of lessons are sometimes impeded.
36. Pupils co-operate and support each another, especially looking after the younger children. Most pupils know right from wrong and collaborate well in group work. In conversation with adults, they demonstrate increasing maturity throughout the key stage. They exercise a high degree of self-discipline as they move around the school. This responsible attitude has a positive effect on the progress they make in lessons. Pupils are well behaved during breaks and play together happily. They are courteous and welcoming to visitors.
37. The majority of pupils develop the capacity to work independently and demonstrate good concentration. Pupils work hard in lessons, readily join in activities provided, and show enthusiasm for their work. They demonstrate good problem solving skills in mathematics and science, and outstanding decision-making skills in their written and spoken language sessions. At the end of the key stage, pupils develop the skills to evaluate their own achievements and know how to improve their learning. Pupils co-operate with staff and their fellow pupils in working collaboratively, on a wide range of curriculum topics.
38. From Y3 upwards, pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities. They deliver daily registers to the school office and carry out additional tasks as directed by the class teacher. Older pupils take very seriously responsibilities related to the school council and when on school visits.

39. Throughout the school, pupils' understanding of equal opportunities issues is developing appropriately. In discussion, pupils have a very good knowledge and respect for the diversity of beliefs, attitudes and cultural traditions within society. Whole school assemblies and school visitors, play a vital part in this process. An outstanding number of visits into the local community and to places of interest, help extend their social skills and their knowledge of the diversity of the world around them.
40. The great majority of pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning in response to the good relationships with teachers and the good and often very good teaching they receive. Pupils enjoy their lessons and show great interest and involvement, particularly in investigative activities. They concentrate well and persevere in the tasks they are set. Pupils have the confidence to involve themselves fully in discussion and constructive argument.
41. Most pupils behave well and know and understand the standards of behaviour expected by the school. Their good behaviour is an important element in the good learning environment in most classes. They are courteous, respectful and supportive to each other and to adults. A small number of pupils, from time to time demonstrate challenging behaviour.
42. Pupils' attendance has not improved significantly since the last inspection. In the last academic year attendance was on average below 92%, which is below national averages but above the LEA and cluster of schools' average. Attendance is significantly affected by family holidays, especially in the autumn and summer terms. However, in the last term there has been an improvement to above 93%. Punctuality of the great majority of pupils is good and the school is working well to improve the punctuality of the few who cause concern. The school's attendance registers comply with statutory requirements although there are a number of instances where absences, due to family holidays, in excess of 10 days, have been authorised.
43. Pupils learn about the world of work through the range of good experiences they receive by visiting places of work and by talking to visitors to the school. The good use of the locality as a resource in the teaching and learning and visits to and from the community enhance pupils' understanding of their community.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

44. Overall the findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report. In the lessons observed the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

The quality of teaching in the subjects and areas of learning inspected	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	21%	69%	10%	0%	0%

45. The percentage of good lessons is above the WAG's all-Wales target of 95% to be satisfactory or better. The percentage of very good lessons is well above the national target of 50% of lessons to be good or better. This is a significant improvement on the good quality of teaching since the last inspection where 66% of lessons were good or better.
46. In the best lessons, teachers have very high expectations of their pupils. They ensure that the targets set are demanding but achievable. All pupils work hard to reach the clear objectives which are set. Teachers plan very carefully to ensure that the work is well matched to the different abilities in their classes. They encourage their pupils enthusiastically and recognise individual efforts warmly. Pupils almost invariably try hard in response because they wish to please their teachers. Pupils respond well to the very positive ways they are encouraged by their teachers.
47. In the best lessons, teachers show very good subject knowledge, for example, when discussing the use of different styles of writing in English, when considering artefacts in a history lesson, or when setting mental challenges in mathematics. Teachers show inventive ways of making their lessons interesting and stimulating, for example, when introducing an element of 'Call my Bluff' when describing the uses of a range of Tudor objects in a history lesson. A particularly strong feature in many lessons is the way in which pupils are regularly reminded of the time they have to complete tasks and the objectives they should meet. As a result, pupils worked at a good pace, and are pleased to achieve at least what is expected of them. In many lessons, the learning is enhanced by a good range of resources which are well organised and are readily available.
48. Teachers promote equality of opportunity very well. They treat all pupils fairly and show respect for individual differences. They promote pupils' learning well through identifying clearly what pupils need to achieve in the shorter term.

Homework is always well matched to individual needs and is carefully arranged to help pupils build successfully on what they have learnt in school.

49. Where teaching has some weaknesses these relate in some cases to misjudgements about the time available to review at the end of a lesson the progress pupils have made. In some lessons, opportunities are missed to promote pupils' use of their knowledge of incidental Welsh. In other lessons, opportunities were overlooked to develop pupils' skills in ICT.
50. There are rigorous procedures in place to monitor pupils and to use that information very well to raise standards further. For example, recently, co-ordinators have very effectively carried out detailed reviews of pupils' performance in the national assessments for 11 year olds and in other reliable tests. From this they have been successful in emphasising areas of strengths and weakness. As a consequence, pupils' progress and achievements in the subjects have considerably improved. Pupils are well informed about what they need to achieve. Pupils' achievements are meticulously recorded and their progress carefully assessed from year to year.
51. All statutory requirements for assessment and reporting to parents on the National Curriculum are met. However, there are some omissions in the Governing Body's Annual Report to Parents and in the School Prospectus (the school have some significant omissions.) Individual reports to parents are detailed, and parents appreciate the balanced picture given of their children.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

52. The findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school in the self-evaluation report.
53. The curriculum is good and it provides equal access to a broad and balanced range of references which meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the agreed syllabus for religious education. There is effective provision for pupils' personal and social education. The curriculum is stimulating and enriched by many relevant practical experiences, and there is good continuity and progression throughout the school. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark for literacy and numeracy on two occasions.
54. The support for learning throughout the school is good. The SEN policy reflects the requirements of the code of practice and the additional support provided for these pupils enables them to feel special and included. It enables pupils with physical and profound needs to access the curriculum and make sound progress in their learning. Generally, pupils with challenging behaviour are positively managed, effectively raising their standard of achievement. Gifted and talented pupils are given opportunities to extend their learning.
55. Curriculum planning 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 includes sufficient progression. There are outstanding strategies within it, such as the "speaking and listening" sessions which significantly increase pupils' level of achievement.
56. Key skills are consistently planned, assessed and reviewed. The recent addition of an information and communication technology (ICT) suite, is contributing to pupils' standards in ICT across the curriculum. A recent focus on accuracy and letter formation in writing has impacted positively on pupils' standards in literacy. Bilingualism is under-emphasised.
57. Pupils benefit from equal opportunities to participate in an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. Individual pupils have access to tuition on a range of musical instruments. Gender differences and social disadvantage are effectively addressed and all pupils have the opportunity to achieve high standards in all areas of school life.
58. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. School assemblies are happy occasions of a broadly Christian nature that offer moral guidance and promote a strong sense of community. In discussion, pupils reflect and demonstrate concern for environmental and conservation issues. Pupils develop an understanding and respect for other faiths and cultures, through religious

education and geography. When appropriate, suitable arrangements are in place for those pupils withdrawn by their parents from acts of collective worship and religious education.

59. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. The aims of the school promote positive values and attitudes. Pupils know right from wrong and provision is enhanced through strategies promoting personal and social education within the curriculum. The school follows the guidance provided by the Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales. (ACCAC) The quality of pupil relationships within the school is good and the majority exhibit good self-discipline.
60. The provision for promoting pupils' cultural development has some strengths and also some shortcomings. St David's day is celebrated through an eisteddfod and the school runs an after-school Welsh folk-dancing club. *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is enhanced through visits to St Fagan's Museum of Welsh Life and Llancaiach Fawr Manor House. However, the achievements of Welsh artists, musicians and writers are under-emphasised.
61. Environmental awareness and the benefits of recycling are effectively practised in school. Pupils have been involved in the "Yellow Woods" challenge, involving the recycling of Yellow Page directories. In discussion, some pupils have a very good understanding of the effects of pollution and the issues related to sustainable development and global citizenship.
62. The partnership with parents is generally good, and in the pre-inspection questionnaires, nearly all parents, expressed satisfaction with most aspects of the work of the school. However, a significant minority were not satisfied with the information they received about what is taught. The school prepares clear explanations of the curriculum in its prospectus and provides evening presentations on various elements, such as literacy and numeracy. Attendance by parents at these evenings has been disappointing. Parents are well informed about the life and work of the school and the various administrative arrangements. The school prospectus and the governing body's annual report lack a number of items statutorily required. The school values the views of parents and has consulted them by questionnaires and incorporated their views in the self-evaluation process.
63. There are strong and effective links with other schools. The close relationship with the adjacent infant school has established an effective transfer and familiarisation programme between KS1 & 2. Members of staff undertake joint INSET and co-operate in linking the curriculum across the key stages, especially in English, mathematics and science. Partnership with the comprehensive school is equally well developed and further enhanced by a physical link created by a footpath and bridge between the two schools. There is a high degree of co-operation resulting in curricular initiatives, bridging activities for pupils and much useful advice and access to resources in specialist areas.

64. The school has a formal partnership with an institution for teacher training and regularly receives student placements. Teaching staff benefit from the professional contact with the college.
65. The school provides a range of useful experiences through links with industry and commerce that influences their learning. Pupils' social development and awareness of responsible behaviour within the community has been enhanced through one project supported by a local supermarket. Pupils' literacy is well developed by contacts with a regional newspaper, and their science and geography studies are enriched by various visits funded by Careers Wales. Members of staff attend courses supported by Careers Wales that contribute well to their professional development. Careers Wales supports the school's 'Proud to Present' system that effectively promotes behaviour, learning and attendance.
66. Pupils' awareness of environmental issues and sustainable development has been enhanced through projects supported by the environment agency and water companies and by their early involvement in school recycling and the eco-schools project. Pupils helped to clean up a watercourse near their school.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

67. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in the self-evaluation report.
68. Overall, the quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is consistently good. The school places very high priority on the pastoral care of pupils. The headteacher and staff know pupils well. There are very good procedures in place to monitor and support pupils' academic progress, their social development and their personal welfare.
69. The school makes satisfactory efforts to work in partnership with parents and carers in caring for, supporting and guiding their children. However, only a minority of parents take advantage of the opportunities to become involved. Parents and carers have regular access to the headteacher and staff, and their views are taken into consideration.
70. The induction programmes for children entering school, moving to new classes and transferring to secondary school are good and effective. Pupils settle well and feel safe and secure. Pupils who join the school at times other than normal report that they settled in quickly, and display good personal and social development.
71. 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 are listened to and treated with respect. The quality of relationships throughout the school is good and this contributes significantly to pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
72. The school makes good provision for personal and social education. The school follows the guidance provided by the ACCAC framework for personal, social and health education (PSHE). This aspect permeates all areas of the curriculum, with pupils confidently discussing emotive issues, especially in the timetabled "personal and social" lessons.
73. The school has good links with the police, school nurse and the psychological service. Good working partnerships have been developed with social services and other outside agencies.
74. The school makes good use of the computerised registers to monitor closely individual pupil's attendance and punctuality and pupils, who are a cause for concern, are quickly identified. Close attention has been given to the worst offenders with good support from the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) but with variable success. The school has begun to pay attention to other pupils whose attendance is just below what is expected.

75. The school's behaviour policy has clear aims and the school has given appropriate attention to establishing consistent management among members of staff across the school. This has included lunchtime supervisors. Where there are specific concerns the school has correctly sought support from the UA behaviour team and a response is awaited. Instances of exclusion were correctly administrated and were last resort actions at the end of a period of monitoring and support. In some but not all cases the action has had long-term beneficial effect. The school's Proud to Present system effectively recognises and celebrates good behaviour and attendance.
76. The school's provision for ensuring the healthy development, safety and well being of all pupils is good with outstanding features. Health and safety issues are properly addressed with fire, electrical and other equipment regularly checked. Risk assessments are undertaken before any educational visit, including detailed assessment of short journeys in the locality.
77. There are precise, well-developed procedures in place for child protection. The headteacher is the designated member of staff responsible and ensures regular staff training. There are good links with social services and very good pastoral and care plans in place for certain pupils at risk.
78. The provision for learners with SEN is good. The school's policy is comprehensive and complies with the new code of practice. The SENCo works effectively with class teachers, support staff and the governors with responsibility for SEN. The relationships and support for pupils within the classroom or in small withdrawn groups are good. The assessment of SEN pupils is not sufficiently diagnostic.
79. Individual teachers and support staff work well to provide good support to meet the individual needs of all pupils. Targets, in individual educational programmes (IEPs) are stated in observable, measurable terms and can be clearly monitored and reviewed. However, there are some shortcomings in the recording of review data.
80. Good, additional support helps to meet the needs of groups of pupils who require literacy enhancement programmes. These are timetabled on a carousel basis ensuring equal opportunities and regular access to the core subjects of English and mathematics.
81. The school's support for the small minority of pupils with profound and challenging behaviour is good. The individual programmes (IEPs) for pupils with challenging behavioural problems have specific targets which are monitored appropriately. The school prepares appropriate pastoral support programmes for pupils at risk or on the verge of exclusion.
82. The school recognises the diversity of children's backgrounds and all pupils are treated with dignity and respect. The good practice observed is actively supported by policies which are regularly monitored and reviewed accordingly. The school ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in

school activities. For example, out-of-school clubs have membership of boys and girls and cover a wide range of interests.

83. The school has good measures in place to eliminate oppressive behaviour, including racial discrimination, bullying and all forms of harassment. Staff and pupils know of the procedures to report discrimination of any sort. Effective strategies, such as the PSE programme and the active school council, increase pupils' awareness of bullying and harassment. These strategies also successfully promote the school's policies on gender equality and access for all.
84. The school ensures that at any time, disabled learners receive equal access to the curriculum. Careful and comprehensive risk assessments are carried out for the major activities in the school, including educational visits and pupils' use of resources.
85. The school has good, effective measures in place to actively recognise and respect diversity. Pupils who are identified as special needs are well included in the life and work of the school. The school knows its pupils well. There are good relations between staff and pupils and between pupils throughout the school. An awareness of diversity is apparent across the curriculum, in the delivery of the PSE programme and religious education, when the importance of respect and tolerance is emphasised.
86. The close relationship between the school and the adjacent feeder infant school has successfully ensured that pupils are well prepared for the transfer between key stages.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

87. Overall, the findings of the inspection match the judgements by the school in its self evaluation report.
88. The quality of leadership shown by the headteacher is very good and has remained so since the last inspection. A very strong feature is in working closely with the deputy headteacher and senior management team. The headteacher has maintained a very strong sense of purpose which is clearly focused on raising standards further. There are high expectations of staff who respond very enthusiastically to new initiatives, for example, in successfully developing new approaches to the teaching of writing in English and numeracy in mathematics. The headteacher and other teachers work closely together in order to put into practice the schools aims. These include a commitment to provide high quality education and to ensuring that all pupils, including those with SEN have good access to it.
89. The school takes careful account of the WAG's and local priorities. For example, there are good arrangements for out of hours learning, a summer school and links with industry. There are also close working relationships between the school and other local schools including the secondary schools to which most pupils transfer.
90. A particularly strong feature in the overall very good leadership shown by the headteacher is improving the performance of the school in the national tests. Currently the school is exceeding the realistic targets agreed with the UA. This success is closely linked to the way that subject co-ordinators have worked closely with the senior management team. They have encouraged teachers very successfully to adapt their teaching to reflect the needs indicated as a result of careful analysis of tests and other information. There is a robust system to review at first hand the quality of teaching and learning and the progress of initiatives. A particularly good example of this is the very thoughtful and effective way the school has raised standards in writing. There are very thorough arrangements for staff appraisal and staff are well aware of each other's targets for improvement and work supportively together to achieve these. Performance management is well established.
91. Governors are very committed to the school and the chair of governors provides a strong lead. Governors are well informed by the professional staff of the progress the school is making towards the targets it is setting for itself. However, the governors' role as a critical friend is under developed. Governors' lack sufficient first hand knowledge of the way the school functions to ensure

that high standards are maintained in the future. They are over reliant upon the professional leadership shown by the headteacher. For example, governors have not given sufficient attention to ensuring that they meet all legal requirements in the Annual Report to Parents and in the details contained in the School's Prospectus. There are a significant number of omissions required in these documents of which the school is now aware.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

92. Overall, the findings of the inspection team match the judgments made by the school in its self evaluation report.
93. The headteacher and senior management team are very well informed about the performance of the school and the standards currently being achieved. The governing body is kept up to date about the progress the school is making to meet and exceed the targets set by the Unitary Authority. A particular strength is the very rigorous way in which subject co-ordinators lead their subjects. All have a very clear understanding of the areas of strengths and development in their areas of responsibility based on first hand observation and discussion. There are well established procedures in place for the senior management team and co-ordinators to visit classes on a planned basis to evaluate the success of agreed initiatives. For example, new initiatives in the teaching of English and mathematics have been carefully reviewed to ensure that they are having the intended impact. Teachers very carefully review the overall performance of pupils in the national tests and other reliable assessments which are regularly made. This information is very well used to assess the progress individual pupils make and the impact of teaching. This process has significantly helped to improve the school's performance in the national tests over time.
94. The school development plan is well constructed and focused appropriately on the needs of the school. The school has made good progress since the last inspection.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

95. The findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school in the self-evaluation report.
96. The school is staffed by eight full-time teachers including the Headteacher and two teachers who job-share. There are three support assistants who have designated responsibilities either with individual pupils or in classes. The school is supported by a language support teacher funded by the UA, who has a pre-determined timetable.
97. Throughout the school, pupils are very well supported by suitably qualified and experienced teachers. Support assistants provide very good quality support for pupils with moderate learning difficulties or statements of special need. They work together effectively in planning and monitoring pupils' progress.
98. The rich learning environment provided by the school is enhanced by sufficient resources which are put to effective use in the support of teaching and learning. The new ICT suite is very good and contributes to the high standards. Classroom computers are also linked to the suite network, so that individual pupils may access their intranet research and raise the standard of achievement across the curriculum. Pupils benefit from an outstanding quantity and range of educational visits supporting most areas of the curriculum.
99. Overall, there is good space for the numbers of pupils on roll. One large hall provides more than adequate space for a variety of community activities, lessons and collective worship. Pupils make good use of the libraries which are situated around the school and offer adequate selection of fiction and non-fiction books. Classrooms also are well stocked with subject-based resources and other library books.
100. The site and location of the school are very pleasant and the extensive grounds, which include two playgrounds and suitably grassed areas, contribute well to the school's environment and to pupils' learning. The school has good access arrangements for disabled pupils.
101. Throughout the school, colourful displays in classrooms and shared areas celebrate pupils' achievements and provide a cheerful, learning environment which is kept clean, pleasant and inviting by the caretaker and his staff. Pupils talk about the displays with enthusiasm and take great pride in showing their contributions.
102. The management and training of teaching and support staff are good. However, there are shortcomings in the effective deployment of support staff in classes. All staff engage in an appropriate level of training to support their professional need

and development. The continual professional development programme is managed effectively and the range of courses and activities undertaken contributes very well to realising the priorities identified in the SDP. The school has developed good processes to ensure that information gained from staff training is disseminated to all members of staff.

103. Curriculum leaders ensure that all resources are well matched to the training needs of individuals. These are linked to the priorities in the school development plan. This is monitored and reviewed appropriately.
104. 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 good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

Key Stage 2 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

105. Overall, standards are good with some outstanding features by the end of the key stage.

Good features

106. Younger KS2 pupils' achieve good speaking skills; they speak clearly and confidently in lessons, using an appropriate range of vocabulary. Pupils are keen to contribute and show a developing confidence in expressing their opinions. Older KS2 pupils particularly enjoy participating in role-play activities involving persuasive arguments on sustainable development or by creatively responding to the characters in an "agony aunt" advice surgery. Pupils perform confidently, taking on appropriate changes of voice, as they develop their character roles. This consistent, regular session is an outstanding feature and is very effective in raising pupils' standards of achievement.

107. Pupils' listening skills are good, such as listening to questions and instructions and responding appropriately. They listen attentively and with concentration to stories and to other pupils' views and opinions. They ask appropriate and relevant questions.

108. Standards in reading are good. Pupils use a range of methods and strategies to help them read new vocabulary including letter sounds, word recognition and picture cues. They discuss the parts of a book well. By the end of the key stage standards are very good and pupils make good progress in developing their fluency and accuracy. They discuss the plots and characters of the books they read and explain clearly the structure and sequence of story writing. They develop good comprehension skills and have a very good understanding of higher order reading skills of "skimming" and "scanning" supported by the use of CD-ROMS and collecting information in cross-curricular subjects. All pupils are familiar with the internet as a tool for research.

109. Throughout the school, the standard of pupils' writing, its content, presentation and accuracy, is outstanding. The recent implementation of a literacy scheme with a specific focus on spelling and presentation has been very effective in improving standards.

110. Pupils write extensively for a good range of purposes including stories, plays, poetry, descriptive and persuasive writing, letters, reports and note-taking. For example, younger KS2 pupils identify features to write clear instructions about "having a bath", whilst older pupils construct and write a very good persuasive argument about a future "road by-pass" being constructed.

111. Pupils' use of extended writing across the curriculum is outstanding. For example, in groups, pupils plan, research the historical background and write detailed character studies about "evacuees" during World War II.

Shortcomings

112. There are no significant shortcomings.

Mathematics

Key Stage 2 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

113. In Y3 and Y4, pupils use a variety of strategies well to calculate accurately when counting. They have a good recall of number patterns and recognise patterns in a series of smaller numbers. They use calculators confidently to check that they have correct answers. They describe to others how they reached an answer and compare the strategies they used. In Y5 and Y6, pupils use their previous knowledge of number well to add and subtract quickly and accurately. They order groups of numbers accurately to size, including negative numbers; for example, they know that minus three is greater than minus four. Pupils in Y6 recognise and describe carefully factors and multiples and prime and squared numbers. They plot quadrilaterals carefully using co-ordinates.
114. Throughout the key stage, pupils investigate and describe the qualities of different two and three dimensional shapes. They have a secure understanding of basic fractions and carry out simple calculations using fractions and decimals. Older pupils in Y6 add and subtract decimals to two places and make realistic estimates of what the correct answers should be before they calculate.
115. In Y3 and Y4, pupils collect and interpret information they gather from simple surveys and questionnaires. They express this data accurately using both bar and pie charts. Older pupils in Y5 and Y6 carry out more complex surveys in collecting data, for example, relating to plants sold in the garden centre or how pupils spend their free time. They express this data using a range of graphical techniques.

Shortcomings

116. Pupils' understanding of how to apply the skills of ICT when handling data are limited.
117. Pupils also have a limited understanding of how to investigate and explore probability.

Welsh second language

Key Stage2 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

118. Pupils' use of incidental Welsh to answer the attendance and dinner register is good. Pupils listen attentively, and the majority respond appropriately to instructions. Although pronunciation is variable, most pupils at the end of the stage understand and use a range of phrases in appropriate contexts.
119. Pupils' oracy skills are good and are developing appropriately. Pupils in the lower end of the key stage understand simple words and phrases and respond appropriately, either orally or through their actions. Pupils sing hymns in Welsh and learn the correct pronunciation of the "phrase" of the week, in their Welsh assemblies. Older KS2 pupils use vocabulary and simple phrases to describe the weather, talk about their likes and dislikes in school subjects, describe the clothes others are wearing and respond appropriately to questions about their feelings.
120. By the end of the key stage, pupils read and understand words in everyday use displayed in their classroom or around the school. KS2 pupils read and understand phrases in course books and worksheets to a satisfactory level.
121. Written work in Welsh in both key stages is satisfactory and pupils make appropriate progress through the key stage.
122. In group discussion, pupils evaluate their ability and progress and communicate what they need to do to improve fairly. In discussion, older KS2 pupils are developing a satisfactory awareness and knowledge of aspects of Welsh culture.

Shortcomings

123. Pupils lack confidence when answering questions in responses. Pupils' ability to initiate dialogue is often limited.
124. At the end of the key stage, pupils' reading ability is limited.
125. Pupils' writing skills are inconsistent and are underdeveloped.

Information technology

Key Stage 2 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

126. Throughout the school, pupils' make good progress in developing information technology skills. They build effectively on previously learned skills.
127. Pupils have good word processing skills. Younger KS2 pupils access or produce work in a range of different formats, using a variety of layouts and font. For example, working collaboratively on a script, pupils master the skills of double clicking on the correct icon, highlighting, deleting and inserting the improved vocabulary with appropriate use of punctuation.
128. At the end of the key stage, pupils develop their word processing skills with increasing confidence. Evidence from scrutiny of work demonstrates that they generate and present their writing independently in a wide range of formats across curriculum areas.
129. Pupils have the ability to make critical judgements about the contribution of ICT to their work and to share and promote creative work with the larger audience. For example, younger KS2 pupils work collaboratively using ICT, to write their own plays based on Aesop's fables, take on various character roles, and record them on tape. Pupils' confidently perform them during an assembly and at a larger concert.
130. They use the Internet in their research on "cave paintings" and information on the "Wives of Henry VIII". At the end of the key stage, pupils confidently add appropriate sound attachments and evaluate their "power point" presentations of cross-curricular work on Victorian times with the peer group.

Shortcomings

131. Pupils' skills in interpreting, analysing and communicating data are under developed.

History

Key Stage 2 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Good and outstanding features

132. In Y3 and Y4, pupils have a clear understanding of what life was like in a Celtic village. They know about the way Celtic society was organised and how they lived in their 'round houses'.

133. Pupils in Y3 and Y4 are familiar with Celtic farming practices and the crops they grew. They design and make replica brochures and jewellery, completing part-finished Celtic patterns and symbols in the process.
134. Older pupils have a very secure understanding of life in Victorian times. For example through visits to local places of interest they develop a very strong empathy with what it was like to live in the area over 100 years ago. They understand and use first and second hand resources well in this task, for example, comparing a local street directory for 1916 with the current occupations in the area. They interpret photographic evidence carefully to help in their development of their historical trail around the locality.
135. There are outstanding features in their studies of the industrialisation of South Wales. Pupils relate to their use of different source materials and artefacts very well and gain an empathy with life in a collier's family. They understand the dangerous working conditions many experienced, for example, as 'navvies', 'pit girls' or as miners in deep mines. They know that some people left Wales in this period to establish communities in the United States of America and in Patagonia.
136. Older pupils in Y5 and Y6 have very well developed skills of historical enquiry, for example, many identify a very good range of Tudor household artefacts. They explain the purposes of these artefacts and use technical vocabulary very confidently and accurately to describe how they were made. They build and use the knowledge they gather from visits to historical sites nearby very well. They use ICT confidently to research and to illustrate their work.
137. Across the key stage pupils have a very thorough understanding of chronology both within shorter and longer term timescales. They know the sequence of the main events in a period, for example, in the reign of Queen Victoria. They recognise the order in which events occurred across different societies and ages, and make connections between them.

Shortcomings

138. There are no significant shortcomings.

Physical education

Key Stage 2 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

139. Pupils throughout the key stage understand the need to warm muscles before vigorous movement. By the end of the key stage, pupils have a very good understanding of the effect of exercise on their bodies and the link between diet and regular exercise to promote a healthy life-style. They change appropriately;

adhere well to safety matters and take responsibility when using large or small apparatus and for taking them out and putting them away.

140. In gymnastics, the majority of pupils exhibit good spatial awareness. They sequence a routine to include transference of weight from one body part to another and most pupils work diligently to improve their skills.
141. By the end of the key stage, pupils develop and extend their sequences using controlled balances on the floor and on apparatus. They transfer weight from one body part to another with increased complexity. Pupils evaluate their own performance with that of others and use this information to improve their own standards.
142. Most pupils interact well with each other during dance. The majority perform routines and sequences well, varying the speed, size and complexity of their movements and responding to stimuli, appropriately. Some pupils demonstrate that they think for themselves and ensure that their movements are of a high quality.
143. Many older KS2 pupils swim confidently and unaided. Pupils throw, catch, attack, dodge and defend well. By the end of the key stage, pupils have refined and controlled these skills and adapt effectively to the restrictions of working within a confined space. They understand the importance of fair play and take part in competitive games sportingly both in and outside the school day.

Shortcomings

144. Pupils do not always understand the importance of being aware of the safety of others.

School's response to the inspection

145. The governors of Plas-y-felin Junior School are happy to receive this report which acknowledges that, in most respects, we have maintained high standards since the last school inspection in 1999. It is recognised that further improvement is required in Welsh (second language) but it is pleasing to see that progress has still been made in this subject. Everyone at the school is very pleased with the success achieved in physical education and mathematics. The considerable improvement achieved in information technology and in the writing and speaking and listening aspects of English are particularly rewarding, as both were specific targets of the school's last post inspection action plan. The outstanding achievements gained in history are a reflection of the positive attitude and strategies adopted throughout the school.
146. The Governors were extremely pleased to note the accuracy of the school's Self Evaluation Report with all seven judgements matching those of the inspection team. The seven key questions cover all aspects of primary school life and we

feel that to be awarded a grade two for each question highlights that the school is going a very long way to achieving its listed aims.

147. The Governors are pleased to note that the leadership of both the headteacher and chair of the Governors remains a strong feature of the school. The support given to the headteacher by his deputy and all other members of staff is a particular strength of the school. This close teamwork helps them focus on the raising of standards.
148. The Governors would like to highlight that the inspection has taken place in the context of the school closing at the end of this academic year. Although an action plan will be written, it will be impossible to address some of the key issues in the time remaining, eg. To update the school's prospectus and annual report to parents. To meet key issues related to curriculum matters eg. Welsh (second language) will also prove difficult, if not impossible to secure measurable progress in the school's one remaining term of existence. Matters referring to extra classroom support will be given priority and can be dealt with in the short-term, assuming that there is sufficient funding available.
149. The Governors note that the report states "Governors lack sufficient first hand knowledge of the way the school functions to ensure that high standards are maintained in the future." We, as Governors, are unsure as to what more we can reasonably do, bearing in mind that one third of Governors are employed at the school anyway and that we have already taken the ground breaking initiative of holding Governor open days each term, involving all governors attending school for the whole of the working day. The Governors regularly receive independent advice and feedback from the external advisers on the school's performance, which is always positive. However, when positive intervention has been suggested, the Governors have, without exception, always acted accordingly. We will therefore seek further advice on what can reasonably be done as a voluntary body to address this issue.
150. The Governors accept that, overall, this is a well-balanced report, which reflects positively on the very high educational standards achieved by the school. The Governors accept that the inspection was carried out in an extremely professional manner by all members of the inspection team and highlights the fact that the school has maintained its high standards and gives clear signposts for further development for those who will inherit the educational responsibilities for its pupils.

Appendix A

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Plas-y-felin Junior School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	8 – 11
Address of school	Lewis Drive Churchill Park Caerphilly
Post-code	CF83 3FT
Telephone number	029 2085 2524

Headteacher	Mr Lyndon Jenkins
Date of appointment	
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr Adrian F Hallworth
Registered inspector	Mr Peter Mathias
Dates of inspection	10 th – 13 th January 2005

Appendix B

School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group					
Year group	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	49	55	60	51	215

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)	24:1
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	27
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection				
Term	R	KS1	KS2	Whole School
Autumn 03	-	-	92.6	92.6
Spring 04	-	-	91.1	91.3
Summer 04	-	-	90.03	90.03

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	35%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	3

Appendix C

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of Key Stage 2:

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2004			Number of pupils in Y6		31				
Percentage of pupils at each level									
			1	2	3	4	5		
English	Teacher assessment	School	2.0	8.2	22.4	59.2	8.2		
		National	1	6	16	45	31		
	Test/Task	School		8.1	14.3	55.1	22.5		
		National		5	12	38	40		
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School		10.2	16.3	63.3	10.2		
		National		4	19	46	30		
	Test/Task	School		8.2	12.2	55.1	24.5		
		National		4	18	42	33		
Science	Teacher assessment	School		8.2	18.4	63.3	10.2		
		National		2	13	49	35		
	Test/Task	School		10.2	61	24.5	0		
		National		2	11	47	38		

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school	79.7	In the school	86.5
In Wales	70	In Wales	72.2

Appendix D

Evidence base of the inspection

A team of three inspectors who were present at the school for nine inspector days carried out the inspection.

Pre-inspection meetings were held with parents and the governing body to discuss the life and work of the school.

Fifty four 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.

Forty two 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 from each year group reading.

Discussions were held with pupils about their work and about the life of the school.

Pupils' behaviour was observed during break periods, at lunchtime and at the beginning and end 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 Peter Mathias Registered Inspector	Context Summary and Recommendations Key Questions 2, 5 and 6 Contributions to Key Question 1 Mathematics History
Mr Eilian James Lay Inspector	Contribution to Key Questions 1 and 3
Mrs Julie Jones Team Inspector	Key Question 7 Contributions to Key Questions 1, 3 and 4 English Welsh as a second language Information and communications technology Physical education

Contractor

Altantes Educational Services
Technology House
Lissadel Street
Salford M6 6AP

Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, headteacher, 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**

**Plas-y-felin Junior School
Lewis Drive
Churchill Park
Caerphilly
CF83 23FT**

School Number: 676/2274

Date of Inspection: 10th–13th January 2005

by

**Mr Peter Mathias
W203/78829**

Date: 14 March 2005

Under Estyn contract number: T/181/04P

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Plas-y-felin Junior 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 Plas-y-felin Junior School took place between 10th and 13th January 2005. An independent team of three inspectors, led by Mr Peter Mathias 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	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

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 this 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.

Context

The nature of the provider

Plas-y-felin Junior School with 215 on roll aged from 8 to 11 years is situated in the centre of Caerphilly town school serves the local area which is a mixture of private and public housing. Pupils come from a range of family backgrounds.

The school reports that the area from which most pupils are drawn is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. About 35% of pupils are eligible for free school meals; this is above the Unitary Authority (UA) average of 20.8% and the all Wales average of 19% of pupils entitled to free school meals. About 20% of pupils are considered to have some degree of special educational needs (SEN), of whom one has a statement of SEN. All pupils have English as their first language and all are from Welsh backgrounds. Nearly all pupils enter the school in Year 3 from the infant school which shares the same site.

The aims of the school emphasise that the school should be a happy, caring place where pupils receive the best possible education and develop well their personal, social and moral characteristics. The school holds the Basic Skills Award and Investors in People Status.

The school's priorities and targets

The school's major priorities and targets for 2004/2006 are:

- to introduce new schemes of work and to raise standards in mathematics;
- to strengthen the role of curriculum co-ordinators;
- to improve the impact of homework and strengthen links with parents;
- to review the teaching of reading;
- to review the science scheme of work;
- to review and develop the use of information and communications technology (ICT).

The school was last inspected in 1999. Most of the current teaching staff were at the school at the time of that inspection.

Summary

Plas-y-felin Junior School is a good school which has made some good progress since the last inspection. The inspection team agreed with all of the judgements made by the school about the standards pupils achieve and with all of the school's judgements about other areas of its work.

Table of grades awarded

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

Standards

Overall pupils' standards of achievement in the subjects inspected are as follows:

Pupils' standards of achievement	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	7%	59%	34%	0%	0%

The standards achieved in lessons are above the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG's) target of 95% of standards to be at least satisfactory and 50% to be good or better. In KS2, in subjects inspected, standards of achievement were as follows:-

Subjects

Subject	Key Stage 2
English	2
Mathematics	2
Welsh as a 2 nd language	3
ICT	2
History	1
Physical education	2

Pupils' standards and progress in the key skills of speaking and listening are good. In writing, standards and progress are high reflecting the emphasis the school is giving to providing more varied opportunities for pupils to write in different styles and for different purposes. Pupils use their skills in numeracy well to measure, calculate and record the information they collect. Pupils are beginning to use ICT confidently for example, to support their work in history. However, standards of achievement in this key skill are limited because opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to apply these skills more widely. Pupils' use of incidental Welsh and their bilingual

competence are also limited because in lessons opportunities to develop their skills of speaking and using Welsh are not always taken up fully. Pupils' personal and creative skills are strong and pupils make good progress in these areas.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress and often reach or exceed the targets set for them.

In 2004, results in the end-of-KS2 national tests for 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science were above the Welsh and local averages and close to the all-Wales target of 80-85% of pupils to reach at least the expected level (Level 4). Since 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching at least the expected level in English, mathematics and science has increased significantly.

Pupils' attitudes to their learning are good and they are well motivated. They work together willingly. Nearly all pupils work hard and show good levels of concentration. They evaluate their own learning realistically and are anxious to please their teachers. They show respect for the diversity of beliefs, attitudes and traditions of other people.

The quality of education and training

In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
21%	69%	10%	0%	0%

The percentage of good lessons is above the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG's) target of 95% to be satisfactory or better and of 50% of teaching to be good or very good. This is a significant improvement on the good quality of teaching observed at the time of the last inspection.

In the best lessons, teachers have very high expectations of their pupils. The tasks are appropriately demanding and teachers plan carefully to ensure that work is well matched to the different abilities in their classes. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and show inventiveness when teaching a topic. Pupils are regularly reminded of what they should aim to accomplish in the lessons and of the time they have to complete their tasks. They treat all pupils fairly and sympathetically.

Where teaching has some shortcomings, insufficient time is set aside to review what pupils have learnt. In some lessons, opportunities are missed to promote pupils' use and knowledge of incidental Welsh and to foster pupils' bilingual skills and to develop the skills of ICT.

Arrangements to monitor pupils' progress and to use that information to inform teachers' future plans and strategies are rigorous. Pupils are well informed about what they need to do to improve.

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It is carefully organised so that pupils build systematically on what they know and can do. It helps raise standards

of achievement significantly. It meets legal requirements and reflects the needs of all pupils, including those with SEN, well. Provision for the basic and key skills are generally good. However, opportunities to develop pupils' bilingual skills and their use of ICT are not included sufficiently in teachers' planning.

Learning experiences promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, overall, and there are very good opportunities for pupils to take part in out of school clubs and activities. The school is mindful to provide pupils with many very good opportunities to learn about their local area and about life in other parts of the world. However, there is insufficient emphasis in the planned curriculum on the music, art and literature of Wales, i.e. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig. The school successfully encourages pupils to be aware of the need to protect the environment and to conserve natural resources.

Pupils' attendance has not improved significantly since the last inspection. In the last academic year, attendance was below the Welsh average of 93%. The school monitors pupils' attendance closely and works constructively with the (UA) to raise attendance. Generally, pupils arrive punctually.

Links with parents, the community and with local schools are strong. However, the school prospectus and the annual report to parents lack a range of information.

Arrangements for child protection and the health and welfare of pupils are strong. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal and social education and also to eliminate oppressive behaviour including racial discrimination, bullying and all forms of harassment. The school carries out detailed risk assessments and ensures that all pupils have the same learning opportunities as others.

Leadership and management

The leadership of the headteacher was a strong feature at the time of the last inspection and it remains so. A particular strength is the close and effective working relationship between the headteacher and other members of the senior management team. There is a very strong sense of purpose which is closely focused on raising standards further and in holding high expectations of all staff. Recent initiatives to improve pupils' performance in the national tests for 11 year olds have been particularly successful. These have resulted in significant improvements in the school's performance compared to similar schools and to schools nationally. There are very well developed arrangements for subject co-ordinators to manage and review progress in their subjects. Teachers work very willingly and constructively together.

The governing body is very committed to the school and is kept well informed by the professional staff about the progress the school is making. However, the role of governors as critical friends is under developed. Governors are over reliant on the very good leadership shown by the headteacher. They do not meet all of their legal requirements in the annual Report to Parents and in the School's Prospectus. The school's self evaluation is accurate and closely linked to the school's plans for improvement. The school has made good progress since the last inspection

particularly in raising standards in the national tests for 11 year olds and in raising standards in ICT.

The overall provision of staffing, accommodation and resources is good. Resources are good in quality and quantity and pupils benefit considerably from the way these are readily available to support teaching and learning. Pupils are very well supported by qualified and experienced teachers. These are very well deployed. However, there are shortcomings in the effective deployment of support staff and in the overall provision of additional non-teaching support in classrooms. Where this support is available it is well organised and effectively used.

Resources are well matched to the school's needs. Decisions about spending are closely linked to the School Development Plan (SDP) which is carefully costed and regularly reviewed. Overall, bearing in mind the high quality of teaching and the good quality of leadership and management in the school, the school gives good value for money.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in Welsh across the school and improve pupils' bilingual skills.
- R2 Review the provision and deployment of support staff in order to provide greater support for teaching in classes.
- R3 Strengthen the role of the Governing Body.
- R4 Continue to build on the progress recently made in raising standards of attendance.
- R5 Address the statutory omissions.

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, headteacher, staff and pupils for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the inspection.