

**Inspection under Section 28 of the
Education Act 2005**

**Pontycymer Nursery School
Victoria Street
Pontycymer
Bridgend
CF32 8NN**

School Number: 6721017

Date of Inspection: 15 – 16 January 2007

by

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Date of Publication: 05 March 2007

Under Estyn contract number: 1115506

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Pontycymer Nursery 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 information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Pontycymer Nursery School took place between 15/01/07 and 16/01/07. An independent team of inspectors, led by Stephanie James 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 nursery schools, special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

This school received a **full** 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 reach the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach 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. Pontycymer Nursery School is a local authority maintained school. It serves the former mining community of Pontycymer and surrounding villages in the Garw Valley, north of Bridgend in South Wales. The school caters for children aged three and four. Approximately two thirds of the children come from families who have been settled in the area for many years. About a third of families have more recently moved to the area from other parts of Wales and England. The school describes its intake as comprising the full range of ability and the area it serves as neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. Children are admitted to school the term after their third birthday and transfer to the local primary school in the September following their fourth birthday.
2. There are currently 21 full-time and four part-time children on roll. All children come from English-speaking homes. No pupil speaks Welsh as a first language. Thirty-three per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above the average for Wales of 18 per cent. Twenty-five per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs (SEN), which is above the national average of approximately 20 per cent.
3. The school was one of six schools chosen to pilot the Bridgend Healthy Schools Scheme and is now in its sixth year of this scheme. It achieved Investor in People status in 2001 and received the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2005. The school was awarded the Eco-Schools Green Flag in May 2006 in recognition of its work in the environment and the community.
4. There have been a number of changes since the last inspection in January 2001. The acting head teacher, who was then a teacher in the school, was appointed shortly after the last inspection. The other three part-time teachers, and two out of three members of the support staff, have also been appointed since the last inspection. The governing body replaced the previous management committee in April 2006.

The school's priorities and targets

5. The school's mission statement is, "I see, I do, I understand." Its main aim is, "to provide an atmosphere that is warm, friendly, happy and secure in which children can play, learn and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding."
6. Targets in the School Development Plan for the current year, 2006 – 2007 include:
 - develop creativity in the indoor and outdoor classrooms;
 - raise standards in key skills;
 - develop the role of the governing body in determining the strategic direction of the school;
 - encourage parents/carers to ensure children attend school regularly;
 - consider the siting of the staff toilet;
 - raise the profile of, and standards in, Cwricwlwm Cymreig (the Welsh Dimension) and multi-cultural understanding.

Summary

7. Pontycymer Nursery School is a good school which very successfully achieves its main aim of providing, "an atmosphere that is warm, friendly, happy and secure in which children can play, learn and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding." The quality of teaching and standards achieved are consistently good and there are outstanding features in a number of areas.

Table of grades awarded

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

Standards

8. Standards of achievement in the sessions observed during the inspection were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
13%	87%	0%	0%	0%

9. In 100 per cent of sessions, children's standards of achievement were judged to be grade 2 or above. This is well above the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) target for 2007 that standards in 65 per cent of lessons should be grade 2 or above.
10. The overall quality of the provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and pupils make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Overall standards in the six areas of learning are:

Standards in the six areas of learning

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

Inspection Area	
Under 5s	Grade 2

11. Most children, regardless of their social or linguistic background, achieve agreed learning goals and a significant minority of them exceed these targets in some aspects of their learning. Children with additional learning needs, including those with special educational needs (SEN) make good, and often better, progress than expected, taking into account their ability and needs. There is no significant disparity between the progress made by girls and boys, relative to their starting points.
12. In the key skills of speaking, literacy, numeracy and use of information and communications technology (ICT) standards are good with no important shortcomings. Children's ability to listen is good with outstanding features. Their bilingual skills are developing well.
13. Children are eager to acquire new knowledge and skills and apply them extremely well in new situations. Their problem solving skills are outstanding. Good features outweigh shortcomings in their creative skills across the curriculum.
14. Progress in personal, social, moral and wider development is good with outstanding features. Children are highly motivated and are developing excellent levels of self-confidence and independence. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
15. Relationships are good with outstanding features. Children are very well behaved and work and play happily together. They respond very well to responsibilities such as litter and energy patrol.
16. Good features outweigh shortcomings in levels of attendance. Attendance is adversely affected by the susceptibility to illness of very young children and by family holidays in term time.
17. Children are developing a good awareness of diversity within society and their place in the community.

The quality of education and training

18. In the sessions observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
20%	80%	0%	0%	0%

19. Consistency is a strong feature of the quality of teaching, whether sessions are led by teachers or support staff. The quality of the teaching was good or better in 100 per cent of sessions. This compares very well with the national picture reported in the annual report (2005) of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

for schools in Wales. Nationally, the quality of teaching is good or better in 79 per cent of lessons and 18 per cent of them have outstanding features.

20. Teachers and support staff have excellent relationships with children. They have a deep, and shared, understanding of the needs of young children and how they learn best. Classroom routines are very well established. These are outstanding features in the quality of teaching.
21. Members of staff use a good range of teaching methods and there is a very good balance between activities that are led by adults and those that children choose themselves.
22. Teachers plan many good opportunities for children to engage in problem solving tasks. They also plan opportunities to stimulate children's creativity. However, the school has correctly identified the need for teachers to extend and enrich the range of children's creative and imaginative experiences.
23. The quality of assessment is good with outstanding features. Assessment is used very effectively to inform teachers' planning of future activities. Reports to parents are excellent and provide a detailed picture of children's progress and achievements in all six areas of learning.
24. The school's approach to the curriculum gives an extremely clear structure and purpose to each day's learning experiences. Prominence is given to personal and social education, which has an outstanding effect on children's learning in this area
25. Children participate in an extensive range of educational visits that enrich their learning. Experiences in the outdoors make an outstanding contribution to children's knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning.
26. The school promotes children's spiritual, social and moral development extremely well and extends children's cultural development in a variety of ways. Its promotion of education for sustainable development is good with outstanding features.
27. Partnerships with parents are good and there are very good links with the local and wider community.
28. The quality of care, support and guidance is good with outstanding features. The school has a very positive ethos and all children are valued and included.
29. There are very effective policies and procedures to monitor attendance, punctuality, behaviour and children's progress and personal development. Members of staff are very alert to issues relating to the well being of the children and there is a very effective policy for child protection.
30. The school's provision for children with additional learning needs is good with outstanding features.

Leadership and management

31. The acting head teacher is very dedicated to the school and has an extremely clear vision for its future direction. She has built a committed, hard working team, who work very closely together. Members of staff share a clear sense of purpose and understanding about what constitutes quality in young children's learning. There is a palpable united team spirit among the staff.
32. Under the excellent leadership of the acting head teacher, the school has been involved in a number of important initiatives that have further extended and improved the quality of the education provided. The school sets clear and realistic targets for improvement both for children, individual members of staff and the school as a whole.
33. Members of the newly constituted governing body are committed to the school and keen to be involved. The school has correctly identified the need for governors to help set the school's strategic direction and monitor the quality of the provision in its current School Development Plan.
34. The self-evaluation process effectively identifies and addresses relevant areas for development. Issues identified by the school as requiring further attention match those identified by the inspection team.
35. There are a good number of qualified and experienced teaching and support staff who are very well deployed. Members of staff regularly extend their knowledge and expertise through relevant courses and personal research. This training has made an outstanding contribution to developments in a number of areas.
36. The part-time school clerk, the caretaker and the lunchtime staff all contribute very well to the smooth running of the school.
37. Good use is made of all available space inside the classroom. The school grounds have been beautifully developed. They are used very effectively and have an outstanding impact on children's learning, particularly their knowledge and understanding of the world.
38. The staff toilet is situated in the combined staff room and office, which is unhygienic and a shortcoming in the quality of the accommodation. However, this has no impact on the quality of education provided for the children.
39. Learning resources are of good quality and their use is regularly reviewed. The school gives very good value for money.
40. Overall, the school has made good progress with no important shortcomings since the last inspection. All the key issues identified then have been fully addressed apart from one. This is the accommodation issue relating to the staff toilet, which remains a shortcoming despite the best efforts of the acting head teacher to remedy it.

41. Standards have been maintained or improved in all six areas of learning. The quality of teaching has also improved so that it is now consistently good with no important shortcomings.

Recommendations

- R1. Further extend opportunities for the development of children's imaginative and creative skills across the curriculum;
- R2. Develop the role of the newly constituted governing body in setting the strategic direction of the school and monitoring the quality of the provision;
- R3. Continue to seek ways of addressing the accommodation issue regarding the staff toilet, which was a key issue in the two previous inspections.

All three recommendations are identified as areas for improvement in the present School Development Plan.

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

42. The findings do not match the judgement of grade 1 made by the school in its self-evaluation report because two of the three areas of learning awarded a grade 2 are the important core areas of language, literacy and communication skills and mathematical development.
43. Standards of achievement in the sessions observed during the inspection were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
13%	87%	0%	0%	0%

44. In 100 per cent of sessions, children's standards of achievement were judged to be grade 2 or above. This is well above the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) target for 2007 that standards in 65 per cent of lessons should be grade 2 or above.
45. The overall quality of the provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and pupils make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Overall standards in the six areas of learning are:

Standards in the areas of learning

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

Inspection Area	
Under 5s	Grade 2

46. Baseline assessments indicate that children are below the Local Education Authority (LEA) average in ability when they start school and a few of them have speech and language difficulties. End of year attainment data provided by the school indicates that most children, regardless of their social or linguistic background, achieve agreed learning goals. A significant minority of them exceed these targets in some aspects of their learning.
47. Children with additional learning needs, including those with special educational needs (SEN) make good, and often better, progress than expected, taking into account their ability and needs. There is no significant

disparity between the progress made by girls and boys, relative to their starting points.

48. In the key skills of speaking, literacy, numeracy and use of information and communications technology (ICT) standards are good with no important shortcomings. Children's ability to listen attentively to adults and to other children in all aspects of their work is good with outstanding features. They show a high degree of concentration on what others are saying, for their age.
49. Children communicate their needs and ideas well and are developing a good understanding of the uses of print in a variety of contexts. They apply their developing numeracy skills and mathematical language effectively in a range of activities such as model making and using money in the 'Garden Centre'.
50. The children work with increasing confidence on appropriate computer programs, using the mouse and the keyboard. They confidently operate the listening station, CD player, television and video recorder and digital camera.
51. Bilingual skills are developing well. Children listen to, understand, respond to and are beginning to use simple phrases such as 'Bore Da', 'Diolch' and 'Da lawn'. They talk with increasing confidence and understanding about living in Wales.
52. Children are eager to acquire new knowledge and skills and apply them extremely well in new situations. Their problem solving skills are outstanding because they show a high degree of perseverance for their age. Good features outweigh shortcomings in their creative skills across the curriculum because they do not engage in so many tasks that stretch their imagination and creativity.
53. One hundred per cent of parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting held before the inspection confirmed that they are happy with children's progress and the standards they achieve.
54. The school operates a 'Plan, Do, Review' approach to the curriculum. Children plan which activities they wish to engage in and discuss what they have been doing at the end of them. Children therefore have a very good understanding of what they are doing because of the time spent in planning their activities and the conscious choices they make. They reflect well on their own learning during recall times and are beginning to be aware of what they need to do to improve.
55. Children make good progress towards fulfilling their potential and are very well prepared for moving on to the reception class in the local primary school.
56. Progress in personal, social, moral and wider development is excellent. Children are highly motivated and work with enthusiasm. A sense of awe and wonder prevails in children's attitudes to many of their experiences, for example, during their sessions in Forest School. They persevere with their chosen tasks and complete activities to their satisfaction. They co-operate

very well in pairs and small groups during sessions and at all other times. They recognise the needs of others and support each other with consideration and respect.

57. Relationships are good with outstanding features. Children are very well behaved. The youngest ones quickly learn routines and are developing self-confidence and independence. Children of a very young age respond well to responsibilities such as litter and energy patrol. Children work and play very well together.
58. Good features outweigh shortcomings in level of attendance. The average rate of attendance over the last three terms was 83.3 per cent. The levels of attendance is adversely affected by the susceptibility to illness of the very young children in the nursery and by family holidays in term time.
59. Children are developing a good awareness of diversity within society and equal opportunities. Girls and boys engage in all activities that are offered. For example, girls pretend to be car mechanics and boys do the ironing in the house area.
60. Children develop a good understanding of their place in the community and the working world through visits to appropriate places and visitors from the 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

61. The findings do not match the judgement of grade 1 made by the school in its self-evaluation report because the school over-estimated the number of outstanding features in the quality of teaching.

62. In the sessions observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
20%	80%	0%	0%	0%

63. Consistency is a strong feature of the quality of teaching, whether sessions are led by teachers or support staff. The quality of the teaching was good or better in 100 per cent of sessions.

64. This compares very well with the national picture reported in the annual report (2005) of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for schools in Wales. Nationally, the quality of teaching is good or better in 79 per cent of lessons and 18 per cent of them have outstanding features.

65. Where there are outstanding features in the quality of teaching, members of staff have excellent relationships with children that enable them to feel happy and secure and which foster their learning and personal and social development.

66. There is also a deep, and shared, understanding of the needs of young children and how they learn best. This is an outstanding feature in the quality of teaching. Classroom routines are very well established and make an excellent contribution to children's ability to work independently.

67. Members of staff use a good range of teaching methods and resources that secure the active engagement of the children. There is a good mix of larger, 'Big Circle' and small group activities and a very good balance between activities that are led by adults and those that children choose themselves. Members of staff make sensitive judgements about when to intervene in children's learning and when to leave them to pursue their own focus.

68. Teachers plan many good opportunities for children to engage in problem solving tasks. They also plan opportunities to stimulate children's creativity. However, the school has correctly identified the need for teachers to extend and enrich the range of children's creative and imaginative experiences.

69. Members of staff use the outdoor environment very well to stimulate children's interest and develop their knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning.
70. Equal opportunities are promoted effectively. Children are encouraged to make non-stereotypical choices in their activities.
71. Use of the Welsh language is promoted well throughout the day, particularly during class routines and through songs and rhymes.
72. Daily team planning meetings draw very effectively on the highly developed observation skills of teaching and support staff. Members of staff bring to the attention of their colleagues any personal observations of significant incidents, achievements or difficulties experienced by individual children so that they can receive further support. This is an outstanding feature in the quality of planning to meet children's individual needs.
73. The quality of assessment is good with outstanding features. Assessment is used extremely effectively to inform teachers' planning of future activities and identify appropriate learning objectives.
74. The comprehensive assessment policy is followed consistently by all staff. Anecdotal evidence of children's learning is regularly transferred to permanent records, which the school then uses extremely effectively to track children's progress. Assessment procedures meet statutory requirements.
75. Teachers involve children in assessing their own learning. As part of the school's philosophy, children plan many of their activities and discuss during recall time what they have learned. This is another outstanding feature.
76. Reports to parents are excellent and provide a detailed picture of children's progress and achievements in all six areas of learning.

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

77. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self evaluation report.
78. The school's approach to the curriculum gives an extremely clear structure and purpose to each day's learning experiences. Planning for the six areas of learning is very detailed and provides coherence and balance in children's learning experiences. These are outstanding features of a curriculum which, also fulfils statutory requirements and provides access for all.
79. There are suitably updated policy statements and schemes of work of very good quality for all areas of learning. Prominence is given to personal and

social education throughout the curriculum, with an outstanding effect on children's learning in this area. The school is very actively involved in the Healthy Schools initiative developed by the Local Education Authority (LEA).

80. Planning for the development of key skills across the six areas of learning is detailed and manageable. Opportunities for their development are identified and carefully interwoven throughout all six areas of learning. However, stimulating opportunities for children to express their imagination and develop their artistic skills across the curriculum are less well developed.
81. Children participate in an extensive range of educational visits that enrich and extend their learning. Numerous visitors also extend the school's curriculum very well. Experiences in the Forest School, the outdoor classroom and sensory garden are very well managed and make an outstanding contribution to children's knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning.
82. The school promotes children's spiritual, social and moral development extremely well. All adults in the school encourage values such as caring and friendship during activities and reflection time.
83. Personal and social skills are also very well developed through opportunities to raise money for people less fortunate than themselves. The school actively promotes children's cultural development through its involvement in events such as Japanese Children's Day and St David's Day celebrations.
84. Partnerships with parents are good. Parents are very well informed about the life and work of the school and are very supportive of activities. They appreciate the educational sessions organised for them on how they can participate effectively in their children's learning.
85. There are good links with the local and wider community. For example, volunteers, including a retired teacher, support children very well in 'Nellie's Garden'. Links with the receiving primary school are good. The school works closely with local colleges and a teacher-training establishment, providing placements and training for students.
86. Role play, educational visits and visitors from the community help to raise children's awareness of the world of work. Members of staff have been involved in business placements and this has enhanced their work in school.
87. *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig*, the Welsh dimension to the curriculum, features prominently in children's learning experiences. The school also promotes children's developing bilingual skills effectively through the incidental use of Welsh throughout the day.
88. The school strongly promotes equality of access and opportunity and is robust in its efforts to tackle social disadvantage. Children, irrespective of their social backgrounds, gender, disability or ethnicity are positively encouraged in all activities. The school effectively raises children's awareness of multi-cultural understanding and promotes racial harmony.

89. The school is recognised as a 'beacon nursery' by the Eco Schools organisation and has been chosen to pilot a renewable and sustainable energy project. As a consequence, children have excellent knowledge of how to care for the environment and conserve energy. Children and parents are involved in recycling and composting schemes to reduce the waste going to landfill sites. The school very effectively promotes children's early awareness of global citizenship. These are outstanding features in the learning experiences provided.
90. Children's' entrepreneurial skills are well developed through practical activities in the garden and in role-play. Children work alongside their parents and students, which helps them to see adults as lifelong learners.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

91. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self evaluation report.
92. The quality of care, support and guidance is good with outstanding features and enables children to have very positive attitudes to school. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, 100 per cent of parents strongly agreed that their children like school.
93. Children are cared for guided and supported very well in a supportive, safe and happy environment. The school has a very positive ethos and all children are valued and included. Members of staff liaise effectively with a wide range of support services. Planned programmes are drawn up and parents and carers are fully involved in discussions about the care of their children.
94. Relationships between teachers and parents are good. Daily informal contact, and arrangements to keep parents informed about school life, is effective in answering any concerns they may have.
95. Transitional arrangements from home to school are carefully planned and implemented. Admission arrangements are flexible and children settle very well into school. Suitable arrangements are made for children who join later.
96. There are very effective policies and procedures to monitor attendance, punctuality and behaviour. The school works closely with a very small number of parents who give concern to help them establish good habits for the future. There are clear classroom rules and parents support the school's strategies for conflict resolution. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting said that children often behave better in school than at home.
97. The school's procedures for monitoring the performance and personal development of all children are good with outstanding features. Children's performance in all areas of learning is very closely tracked and any areas

where their progress is not as expected are quickly identified and appropriate support is given.

98. There are extremely clear, well-documented policies and procedures for assuring children's well being and health and safety. Risk assessments are systematic. The school provides a safe and secure environment for work and play. Members of staff are very alert to issues relating to the well being of the children.
99. There is a very effective policy and very well-established procedures for child protection. The acting head teacher is the designated person and the senior class teacher is her deputy. There is a named link governor. Teachers and support staff are very well aware of their responsibilities.
100. Although there is no school council, given their young age, children on the Eco Committee give their ideas and suggestions, which are added to the Eco Action Plan.
101. The school's provision for children with additional learning needs is good with outstanding features. Children who may have special educational needs (SEN), or may be gifted or talented, are identified very quickly and excellent support is given to them both in class and in one-to-one sessions, where appropriate. Very good attention is given to ensuring that the education provided is inclusive for all.
102. The Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCo) and support staff are very knowledgeable about this area of their work. They also liaise very closely with a wide range of specialists including the Speech and Language Therapist, the Educational Psychologist and the Health Visitor to diagnose and meet children's needs and check on their progress. Parents are closely involved in the process at all stages and attend meetings four times a year to review their progress.
103. The school has good relevant policies and procedures to support and guide children, taking into account their social, educational, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Policies and practices positively promote gender and race equality and this is observed in all areas of the school's provision. Conflict resolution strategies are used effectively to prevent oppressive behaviour and bullying.
104. The building has been adapted to accommodate children with disabilities. There are no children with mobility disabilities currently attending the school.
105. The school promotes children's developing awareness and respect for diversity in society in a good variety of appropriate ways.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

106. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self evaluation report.
107. The acting head teacher is very dedicated to the school and has an extremely clear vision for its future direction. She has very successfully managed a number of changes in staffing since the last inspection. She has built a committed, hard working team, who work very closely together for the good of the children. They all clearly enjoy their work and there is a palpable united team spirit among the staff. These are outstanding features in the quality of leadership.
108. The school's mission statement, 'I see, I do, I understand' is reflected in all aspects of its work. Members of staff share, to a remarkably consistent degree, a clear sense of purpose and understanding about what constitutes quality in young children's learning. The school's values clearly promote equality of opportunity for all.
109. The school takes extremely good account of national priorities. The acting head teacher has very successfully led the school in a number of important initiatives that have extended and improved the quality of the education provided. These include the Eco Schools project, the Bridgend 'Healthy Schools' scheme, and close involvement in education for sustainable development and global citizenship. The school has also achieved the Investors in People and Basic Skills awards.
110. Information from assessment is used effectively to identify targets for improvement. The school sets clear and realistic targets both for children, individual members of staff and the school as a whole.
111. There is a well formulated system for monitoring the performance of all members of staff so that everyone knows what to expect. The monitoring system is a two-way process, since the person being monitored also gives written feedback on the outcomes of the observation. Staff development has a continuing positive impact on the quality of the provision.
112. Members of the newly constituted governing body understand their role and responsibilities and they meet legal requirements. They are keen to be involved in the life of the school, and have attended some initial training.
113. The governing body has held one meeting, to date, but has already allocated a number of link governors for specific areas of the school's work. A finance committee has been established and has carried out an initial review of the budget.

114. The school has correctly identified the need for governors to help set the school's strategic direction and monitor the quality of the provision in its current School Development Plan.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

115. The school graded this key question grade 1/2 in its self-evaluation report. The findings of the inspection team confirm that there are no important shortcomings in the quality of the school's self-evaluation but not enough outstanding features to warrant a grade 1.
116. The acting head teacher, along with all members of staff, carefully monitors children's progress during their time in school. All members of staff are fully and actively involved in the process.
117. Curriculum leaders very effectively evaluate the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility. Since they work so closely together, they have constant informal first-hand evidence of standards in those areas, in addition to the evidence gained from formal appraisal procedures. Self-evaluation processes very effectively identify and address relevant areas for development, including those set by the LEA and Welsh Assembly Government. These are outstanding features in the self-evaluation process.
118. The school effectively seeks out and take account of the views of learners, staff and parents, whose opinions are sought through discussions and questionnaires. The school is in a transitional period from having a management committee to full governing body status. Governors therefore have not yet had the opportunity to be fully involved in the self-evaluation process.
119. The school's self-evaluation report is a very detailed, analytical document that provides comprehensive evidence of the school's achievements. It matches, or nearly matches, the judgements made by the inspection team in five out of the seven key questions. Issues identified by the school as requiring further attention match those identified by the inspection team.
120. Priorities for development in the School Development Plan are agreed following careful audits and analysis of available information. They are shared with all members of staff and the current governing body. The acting head teacher, the previous management committee and current governing body ensure that all identified priorities are well resourced. Most priorities set out in previous development and action plans have been met.
121. Overall, the school has made good progress with no important shortcomings since the last inspection. All the key issues, identified at that time relating to the quality of education provided for the children, have been fully addressed.

One issue remains. This is the accommodation issue relating to the staff toilet. The acting head teacher has persistently tried to remedy this issue, but it has not been resolved because sufficient funds have not yet become available.

122. Standards have been maintained or improved in all six areas of learning since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has also improved so that it is now consistently good with no important shortcomings.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

123. The school graded this key question 1/2 in its self-evaluation report. The findings of the inspection team confirm that there are a number of outstanding features in the school's use of the available staffing, resources and accommodation.
124. There are a good number of qualified and experienced teaching and support staff to meet the needs of the children. Staff are very well deployed and regular opportunities are taken to share expertise. Teachers and support staff fulfil the duties outlined in their job descriptions extremely well. This is an outstanding feature in the use made of available staff.
125. Members of staff regularly extend their knowledge and expertise through relevant courses and personal research. This training has made an outstanding contribution to developments in the six areas of learning and other aspects of the school's provision.
126. The part-time school clerk, the caretaker and the lunchtime staff all contribute very well to the smooth running of the school. Standards of cleanliness inside and outside the school are very high.
127. Learning resources are very good for all areas of learning and are easily accessible. The computer and listening centres are used well. Resources for bilingualism and multi-cultural learning are developing well.
128. Children have regular access to the outdoor classroom. The school grounds have been developed to an outstanding level with shaded areas and a butterfly and sensory garden containing different textures and fragrant plants for the children to explore. The grounds contain several 'minibeast' habitats and an area that attracts birds that children can observe from inside the classroom. These are outstanding features in the accommodation that have a very positive impact on children's learning, particularly their knowledge and understanding of the world.
129. Good use is made of all available space inside the classroom. It is adapted very well for small and large group work. Displays of children's work, together with bilingual signs in all areas, create an attractive learning environment.

130. Most of the concerns raised about the accommodation at the time of the last inspection have now been addressed. However, the siting of the staff toilet has not been remedied. It is situated in the combined staff room and office, where adults have lunch, and it does not have a ventilation lobby. This is unhygienic and sometimes embarrassing for members of staff. However, this shortcoming in the accommodation has no impact on the quality of education provided for the children.
131. All staff are very effectively deployed to make good use of their strengths and experience in all areas of learning. Teaching and support staff regularly attend appropriate courses and visit other schools to improve their skills. Courses are always linked to their continuing professional development needs and priorities in the School Development Plan. The school has established a manageable, efficient system for all teachers to be released for the statutory Planning, Preparation and Assessment time.
132. The investment in equipment and resources is very well matched to targets in the School Development Plan and is a good response to the findings of the previous inspection report. The use of resources is regularly reviewed and overall the school gives good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Under 5s: Grade 2

133. The overall quality of the provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and pupils make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Overall standards in the six areas of learning are:

Language, literacy and communication skills

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

134. Children develop their listening skills to a very high standard. They listen very carefully to their teachers during large and small group sessions and also show a remarkably high degree of attentiveness to other children when it is their turn to speak. They respond very well to teachers' instructions and directions and usually answer questions appropriately. They also listen and respond in an appropriate manner to simple Welsh phrases.
135. The children speak with increasing confidence. Most of them communicate their needs and ideas well and they spontaneously offer comments during group discussions. They develop their confidence in speaking to a larger group during familiar routines such as the calendar and weather chart. All the children enjoy reciting well-known nursery songs and rhymes such as 'The Wheels on the Bus' and 'Mary Mary Quite Contrary'. They are familiar with, and are beginning to use simple Welsh phrases.
136. Early reading skills are developing well. Most children understand that written symbols have sound and meaning. Older and more experienced children recognise some letters and their related sounds, particularly those at the start of their own names and those of their friends. They all enjoy listening to familiar stories, offer comments on the pictures and join in the refrain when appropriate. They often choose to look at books, handle them correctly and some of them are beginning to act as readers.
137. Progress in the development of early writing skills is good and children understand that writing has a range of functions. For example, they confidently 'write' what they plan to do on 'post-it' notes during their planning sessions, record telephone messages during their role play activities in the house area and make greetings cards and party lists for birthdays. Most children attempt to write their names using squiggles and letter-like shapes. Older and more experienced children can write their own names clearly and independently.

Shortcomings

138. There are no important shortcomings.

Personal and social development

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

139. Children make choices, work independently and concentrate purposefully on their activities for sustained periods of time. They are extremely happy and confident in the nursery environment and look forward to coming to school. These are outstanding features in their personal development. They understand what is fair and wait patiently for their turn in group activities. They develop excellent relationships with adults and with other children. They show considerable awareness of the feelings of others and what might make them happy or sad. These are outstanding features in their social development. Children also show great confidence and independence in the natural environment of Forest School and eagerly embrace new experiences.

Good features

140. Children increasingly take responsibility for undressing and dressing themselves before and after physical exercise. They show good awareness of the need for personal hygiene. For example, they know that they must wash their hands before meals because "there might be germs" and understand the need to brush their teeth afterwards. Lunch times are pleasant social occasions during which children behave very well and learn how to handle cutlery appropriately. Children respond positively to new cultural experiences. They enjoy celebrating one another's birthdays and Christmas. They are also developing an increasing awareness of other cultures through their celebration of Divali, their exploration of differences between Singapore and Wales and their involvement in Japanese Children's Day. They show respect and care for their surroundings, tidying up quickly and effectively at the end of sessions and putting things away in their correct places.

Shortcomings

141. There are no important shortcomings.

Mathematical development

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

142. Mathematical skills and concepts are developing well. Children understand 'full' and 'empty', 'more' and 'less', 'big' and 'small' and apply their knowledge well in tasks such as cutting fruit into more pieces. They are familiar with a calendar and a few children are aware of their own birthday month and date. Most children can name the current month and date which they change daily on the class calendar. During a mathematics trail in the outdoor classroom, children successfully identify large coloured shapes and find gloves of different sizes to suit different sized bears. They correctly match bowls to boxes, count up to ten objects and use correct mathematical vocabulary.

143. Children make good progress in their understanding of mathematical processes. They recognise and recreate basic patterns and successfully make a more complex sequential pattern by joining pieces of material together. They look at 2D and 3D shapes and can make their own 2D and 3D models. Most children recognise and can name a number of shapes. While sorting, they group objects together that are the same in one way but different in others, for example leaves, bears, shapes. They use appropriate words to describe the relative position of things.
144. They recall a range of number rhymes, songs, stories and counting games, for example, 'Five Little Ducks'. More able children can count reliably up to 16, the current date. A few can describe the simple number operation that they have performed. They are beginning to recognise and match numbers to the sign and sound. They know the names of the primary colours in both English and Welsh.
145. Children's understanding of the mathematics of money is developing well through their visits to shops, during role play in the 'Garden Centre' and while sorting coins according to value.

Shortcomings

146. There are no important shortcomings.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Grade 1: good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

147. Children have an exceptional understanding of the importance of the environment and are involved in planning for developments in the outdoor classroom. Two children at a time take part in meetings and report back to the class. Children also have an excellent understanding of how to care for plants and animals through their activities in the school gardens and in Forest School. Their awareness of the need for conserving resources is highly developed. For example, they shred and recycle paper, carry out energy wastage checks during 'energy patrol' and collect rainwater in a water butt, which they use to water the plants and vegetables that they grow.

Good features

148. Children develop a good awareness of their homes and where they live. They discuss, and are beginning to compare, their homes and culture with Singapore. They know about the range of uses of ICT in school and at home, such as the listening centre, television and mobile phone. They use the computer and digital camera with increasing confidence. They are developing a good concept of time by talking about their daily and weekly routines. Their knowledge of the work people do is developing well. They have a good understanding of the purpose and use of money through visits to the cafe in a large supermarket and smaller local shops.

Shortcomings

149. There are no important shortcomings.

Physical development

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

150. Children make excellent progress in developing their physical skills and move confidently, showing outstanding control and co-ordination. They make excellent use of the space available to them outdoors, benefiting fully from regular opportunities to use large apparatus and wheeled toys in all weathers.

Good features

151. Children are beginning to distinguish between different ways of travelling, such as marching, galloping and jumping. They enjoy moving their bodies in different ways and move sensibly in the allocated space, responding appropriately to suggestions about spatial relationships such as 'above' and 'below'. They are beginning to understand the importance of health and safety. They recognise changes that happen during exercise, for example, that their hearts beat faster. They can move while manipulating a ball, for example, by running and rolling it simultaneously. Their manipulative skills are well developed because of the school's emphasis on developing independence. They use scissors, sellotape dispensers, staplers and elastic bands with increasing dexterity. They confidently open packages during picnic lunches and use chopsticks while learning about Chinese food. They competently thread large beads on to a lace and use paint brushes with increasing control.

Shortcomings

152. There are no important shortcomings.

Creative development

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

153. All children enjoy singing simple songs together as part of a group. They know the names of a number of percussion instruments and are beginning to distinguish between the different sounds they make. They enjoy playing them and respond well to directions from the teacher acting in role as the 'conductor.' They also enjoy responding to music, dancing and moving their bodies in different ways to imitate the movements of worms, birds and frogs. In their role play in the house area, children enjoy pretending to be grown-ups and acting out domestic activities.

154. Children create some good two and three-dimensional representational images. They make effective model houses from recycled materials and

make appropriate choices of materials to represent features such as windows and doors. They enjoy spreading paint on a table and using a variety of implements, including their own hands, to make different patterns. They express their individuality well in their paintings of Father Christmas and in their close observational drawings of birds, plants and flowers in the garden area.

Shortcomings

155. There are no important shortcomings.

School's response to the inspection

The acting head teacher, staff and governors were very pleased with the way the inspection was conducted and the approach and professionalism of the inspection team.

The inspection findings recognise that Pontycymer Nursery School is a good school which very successfully achieves its main aim of providing, "an atmosphere that is warm, friendly, happy and secure in which children can play, learn and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding".

The report confirms that the school's self-evaluation process effectively identifies and addresses relevant areas for development and that the self-evaluation report is a very detailed, analytical document that provides comprehensive evidence of the school's achievements.

The prominence given to personal and social development and our promotion of education for sustainable development and global citizenship were recognised as having outstanding features.

We are pleased that the inspection team have found that standards have been maintained or improved in all six areas of learning since the last inspection and the quality of teaching has also improved so that it is now consistently good.

There are many other comments and statements in the report that we are proud to see recognised in print, notably the mutual respect between staff and children, the palpable united team spirit among the staff, the high standards of behaviour and politeness and the recognition of the warm, caring ethos of the school.

We consider the report to be an accurate and positive reflection of the work of the school and the hard work of all the staff and children. We recognise that members of the newly constituted governing body are committed to the school and are keen to be more involved in helping set the school's strategic direction and monitor the quality of the education provided.

The recommendations will be discussed at the next governing body meeting and an appropriate Action Plan will be drawn up by the staff and governors. As the recommendations have already been identified in this year's School Development Plan we should find this a manageable undertaking. The recommendation for teachers to extend and enrich the range of children's creative and imaginative experiences will be addressed this year and, if necessary, will be developed further as a target in the 2007/2008 School Development Plan.

A copy of the Action Plan will be sent to all parents/carers. The Governors' Annual Report to Parents will report on the progress we are making on the inspection recommendations.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Pontycymer Nursery School
School type	Nursery
Age-range of pupils	3 to 4
Address of school	Victoria Street Pontycymer Bridgend
Postcode	CF32 8NN
Telephone number	01656 870365

Head teacher (Acting)	Ms Stephanie Evans
Date of appointment	September 2001
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr Colin Campbell
Registered inspector	Ms Stephanie James
Dates of inspection	15 – 16 January 2007

Appendix 2

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	25.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.5

*fte = full time equivalent

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	1	3	2

Staffing information	
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	10 : 1
Teacher (fte): class ratio	2 : 1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of School
Spring 2006	85%	-	-
Summer 2006	77%	-	-
Autumn 2006	87%	-	-

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	33%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

Appendix 3

Evidence base of the inspection

Three inspectors spent a total of five inspector days in the school. The acting head teacher of the school was the nominee. A team meeting was held prior to the inspection.

Inspectors visited:

- fifteen sessions or part-sessions.

Members of the inspection team had meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection;
- the acting head teacher, teachers, support and administrative staff and groups of children during the inspection.

The team also considered:

- the school's self evaluation report;
- fourteen responses to the parents'/carers' questionnaire;
- a comprehensive range of documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- a range of children's work.

The inspection team also held post inspection meetings with the staff and governing body.

Appendix 4

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Stephanie James Registered Inspector	Key questions 1, 2 and 5 Language, Literacy and Communication Skills Personal and Social Development Creative Development Special Educational Needs Context Summary Recommendations Appendices.
Helen Smith Team Inspector	Key questions 3, 6 and 7 Contributions to other key questions Mathematical Development Knowledge and Understanding of the World Physical Development Bilingualism.
Caterina Lewis Lay Inspector	Key question 4 Contributions to other key questions.
Stephanie Evans Acting Head teacher and Nominee	Provision of information.

The contractor was:

Evenlode Education Ltd
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Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the staff, governing body, parents and pupils for their courtesy and help during the inspection.