

REPORT

on the

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

**YNYSOWEN NURSERY SCHOOL
ABERFAN
MERTHYR TYDFIL
CF48 4NT**

School Number: 675/1001

Date of Inspection: 18 – 19 March 2002

By

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Ynysowen Nursery School is a local authority maintained school which is situated in the village of Aberfan, five miles south of Merthyr Tydfil. The school is a nursery for children aged three and four and there are currently 32.5 full-time equivalent children on roll; 29 children attend full-time and 7 attend part-time. Children are admitted to the nursery after their third birthday. The numbers of children on roll for the last three years have declined slightly. Approximately 98 per cent of the children are from English speaking homes and 2 per cent are from ethnic minority groups. There are no children from Welsh speaking homes and Welsh is taught as a second language. The school's mission statement aims to provide a welcoming, happy and secure environment in which children can learn and develop to reach their full potential.

The school considers its catchment area to be economically disadvantaged. The nature of the intake is disadvantaged and comprises many less able and a few able children. Currently there are three children on the school's Special Educational Needs (SEN) register. Baseline assessments are undertaken on entry to the school and results indicate well below average attainment for most children.

The school was last inspected in the summer term 1997 and has met the targets set in its post-inspection action plan to improve the educational provision and children's standards of achievement. Some of the targets in the current School Development Plan (SDP) have already been met. The focus for the year will be to improve children's standards in literacy and numeracy skills. An analysis of school based assessments is the basis for target setting to improve standards.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Ynysowen Nursery School is a very good school with some outstanding features. The high commitment of staff to improve curricular provision in order to raise standards, especially for children with low attainment on entry, and their high expectations of children's personal and social development, contribute to the school's success. The headteacher provides highly efficient, caring leadership and is ably supported by the staff who work very well as an effective team.

Educational standards achieved by children

- The educational provision is very good and successfully promotes the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Children's standards of achievement are very good overall; they are making very good progress in all the areas of learning towards the Desirable Outcomes. Baseline assessments on entry indicate that attainment is below

average for most children. They make considerable progress towards attaining above average results by the time they leave the nursery.

- Children’s standards of achievement were very good in 38 per cent of the sessions observed and good in 62 per cent.
- Standards in the six areas of learning are as follows:

Language, literacy and communication skills:	Very good
Personal and social development:	Very good
Mathematical development:	Very good
Knowledge and understanding of the world:	Very good
Physical development:	Very good
Creative development:	Good

- Standards are very good overall in language, literacy and communication skills. Although children enter the nursery with low attainment in speaking and listening skills, they make very good progress in developing these skills. They speak clearly with confidence and make good attempts to speak in complete sentences. Their listening skills are very good and they listen attentively to the staff and other children. They achieve very good standards in early reading and writing skills. They are making very good progress towards achieving the learning outcomes in all these areas.
- Children’s personal and social development is very good. They make rapid progress in gaining confidence and independence. They establish effective relationships with other children and adults. They use their imagination well during play activities and co-operate well when working in pairs or as part of a group.
- Standards are very good in mathematical development and children successfully use mathematics as an integral part of a range of activities, which are effective in consolidating mathematical language and understanding of concepts.
- Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are very good. Children benefit from the high quality provision in this area, which has a positive impact on their standards of achievement.
- Children’s physical development is very good overall. They show confidence and enjoyment in this area of work; their physical mobility and control are developing well through a wide range of daily outdoor and indoor activities.
- Children are making good progress in their creative development. They confidently use a range of materials and equipment to produce a variety of artwork. They thoroughly enjoy musical activities and are making good progress in music making.
- Children’s standards and progress in the key skills across the curriculum are very good and are used constantly as they move from one activity to another. Standards achieved in literacy skills are very good and children make considerable progress in their use of speaking, listening, early reading and writing skills across the curriculum. The weekly Language Day is particularly effective in promoting these skills across a range of practical activities. The use of numeracy skills in different areas is very good. Children make good use of a range of information and communications technology (ICT) for different purposes.

Ethos of the school

- The provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and reflects the caring ethos in the school. Provision for children's cultural development is a considerable strength in the school.
- The quality of children's behaviour and attitudes to work are very good. The school makes every effort to promote and praise good behaviour, which has a positive effect on children's learning and progress.
- Levels of attendance are satisfactory and absences are due mainly to illness. Punctuality throughout the day is good.

The quality of education

- The quality of teaching was very good in 27 per cent of the sessions observed and good in 73 per cent. The staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning and provide very good support for the children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in the six areas of learning. They have high expectations and set challenging and interesting tasks to promote children's learning.
- The school has very good procedures for assessing, recording and reporting children's achievements and progress. Effective use is made of assessments to set targets for improvement and to inform future planning. Reports to parents are of a high quality, and parents appreciate the detailed information they receive about their children.
- Curricular provision is of very good quality and successfully promotes the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Schemes of work are in place for all areas of learning; they are detailed and give very good support to teacher's planning for the school's collection of themes 'What's in the Box.' The quality of curriculum planning is very good, and learning objectives are clearly focused on the skills, knowledge and understanding which the children are to acquire.
- The school provides a very good standard of educational support, welfare and personal guidance for children. The school's procedures for promoting the well-being and health and safety of children are very good and there are appropriate policies and procedures in place.
- The quality of the provision for children with SEN is very good and complies with the Code of Practice. Children respond very well to the support provided and make good progress in line with the targets set in the individual education plans (IEPs).
- Partnerships between the school and parents, the community, schools and other institutions are very good and have a beneficial impact on children's learning. Parents are very well informed about the activities of the school and are supportive of the school's events and activities. The school's partnership with industry is good.

Management

- The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good. There are very effective procedures for evaluating teaching and learning, and the school carefully monitors the progress made towards achieving targets.
- Resources are managed efficiently, and the aims of the school are reinforced, ensuring very good value for money. The school's monitoring and self-evaluation procedures are effective in identifying areas for development and the training needs of staff. The school sets targets for improvement which are incorporated in the SDP.

- The SDP is effective in moving the school forwards. Each action plan has clear goals and includes success criteria, organisation implications for staff, actions for development and time schedules.
- There are a good number of experienced and well motivated staff who are effectively deployed. The teachers and nursery nurses work very well together as an effective team.
- The school has ample space for the number of children. The inside of the building is well maintained and provides a very attractive learning environment but the condition of the outside paintwork of the building is poor. Good use is made of all available space, both inside and outside, to enhance children's experiences.
- There are very good quality displays of children's work, which are effective in celebrating their achievements. The provision of resources is very good and staff and children make effective use of all available books, materials and equipment.
- The quality of leadership and management of the school is very good. The school's aims and values, including a commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity for all, promote a caring ethos and high standards and they give a clear sense of purpose and direction for the school.

School improvement

- Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in meeting the targets set in the action plan which address the key issues from the previous inspection report. These include:
 - improving standards of achievement in ICT, physical gross motor skills, the use of incidental Welsh, handling and enjoying books and using a wider range of media in art and craft activities;
 - improving the quality of teaching and staff interaction with children in the creative play areas;
 - improving curriculum documentation;
 - maintaining the good quality curriculum provision especially for language and personal and social development.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Children's standards of achievement were very good in 38 per cent of the sessions observed and good in 62 per cent.

- Standards of achievement are very good overall. Most children are making very good progress towards achieving the Desirable Outcomes in all the areas of learning. They are confidently developing their skills, knowledge and understanding, especially in language, literacy and communication and personal and social development. Baseline assessments on entry indicate that attainment is below average for most children. They make considerable progress towards attaining above average results by the time they leave the nursery.

- Standards are very good overall in language, literacy and communication skills. Children listen very well to instructions and respond appropriately. They listen with interest and concentration during oral sessions and listen carefully to the views of other children. They speak with confidence, clearly and audibly and are keen to answer questions and contribute to discussion. Children are becoming familiar with Welsh vocabulary and respond well in oral and singing sessions. They are making very good progress towards the development of reading skills; they enjoy books, handle them carefully and readily share them with others. They understand that words and pictures carry meaning and can recognise some familiar words and letters. Their writing skills are developing well and they take every opportunity to use their emergent writing skills. Many children can recognise and write their own name by the time they leave the nursery.
- Children's personal and social development is very good. They show confidence and self-respect and establish effective relationships with other children and adults. They work very well at their tasks, independently, in pairs or as part of a group. They concentrate well, persevere and seek help when needed. Their behaviour is very good; they take turns, co-operate well and share fairly. They have very positive attitudes to their work.
- Standards are very good in mathematical development. Children successfully use mathematics as an integral part of their activities, for example, playing in the post office, cooking, building with bricks and constructional equipment, and in sand and water play. They can count accurately to 10 in English and in Welsh, recognise and name numbers to five and sort by colour, shape and size. They can recognise and accurately name 2-D and 3-D shapes. They use mathematical language well and enjoy singing a variety of number rhymes, action songs and jingles.
- Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are very good. Children benefit from the high quality provision in this area, which has a very positive impact on their understanding of the world around them. They talk confidently about their environment, their families and the school and are especially proud of their Japanese garden. They talk with enthusiasm during role-play activities, such as 'Men at work' and explain clearly what they are doing. They use a computer confidently and control a mouse competently to select different options.
- Standards in physical development are very good. Children make very good progress in the development of fine motor skills. They thoroughly enjoy the outdoor play activities and make good use of the variety of play equipment and wheeled toys. During movement and dance sessions, they listen carefully to music and instructions, express movements with increasing control and co-ordination and display a good awareness of space and others. Their gross motor skills of climbing, sliding, balancing, swinging and landing are underdeveloped at present due to the lack of appropriate climbing equipment.
- Standards in creative development are good. Children confidently use a range of materials and equipment to produce a variety of artwork, especially in collage and printing. They have limited experiences to explore elements of art through 3-D work. They thoroughly enjoy musical activities and are making good progress in their music making.
- All children make good progress towards the targets for improvement set by the school in relation to assessment criteria. The targets are based on the effective assessment of children's achievements as well as baseline assessments. Children with SEN make good progress towards the targets set in the IEPs.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

Children's overall standards of achievement and progress in key skills across the curriculum are very good. Standards achieved in language, literacy and communication skills are very good overall. The use of numeracy skills across the areas of learning is very good. Children's use of a range of ICT for different purposes is good.

- Children make good use of key skills in many aspects of their work in all the areas of learning. They benefit from the strong support provided to help them to concentrate and listen with interest and to speak clearly. The weekly Language Day is very effective in promoting language skills. 'Thank you time' discussions and 'News-time' sessions increase children's confidence to speak aloud, clearly and audibly. The use of role-play activities is effective in developing children's language and social skills to play and work co-operatively. Children are encouraged to look at a variety of books and enjoy listening to the stories whilst following the illustrations. They make effective use of their early reading and writing skills across the curriculum.
- Children's standards in numeracy across the curriculum are very good. They use numeracy as an integral part of many activities across the areas of learning. They consolidate their knowledge of mathematics through counting, sorting, ordering and matching activities as well as through scientific and technological investigations. They make good use of their knowledge of number whilst playing in the post office.
- Children's use of a range of ICT across the curriculum is good. They confidently operate a listening centre and know how to use the switches safely in order to listen to tape recordings. They use computer equipment confidently in order to enhance their learning. They are familiar with a keyboard and most can control a mouse successfully to select and move items on the screen.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The provision for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and reflects the caring ethos in the school. The provision for cultural development is a considerable strength in the school.

- The children are fully aware that all aspects in the life of the school reflect a caring and sharing atmosphere and they respond well to the very good example set by all adults at the school.
- Children's development is skilfully woven into the planning in all six areas of learning. Daily 'Thank you time' is a form of collective worship and the children understand that saying a prayer is 'talking to God.'
- The children understand the moral aspect of Bible stories and take part in celebrating the main Christian festivals at an appropriate level for their understanding.
- Their very good standards in social development are reflected in the way they co-operate and play together within the various activities. They are developing very good standards in self-reliance and independence as they move around from one activity to the next. They understand that rules are needed to ensure fair play for all.

- The courtesy shown by adults towards all children and their parents is copied by the children and they are very welcoming and courteous towards visitors as well as in their daily interaction in the school. This creates a very happy community.
- The children's understanding of cultures other than their own is very skilfully woven into the topics. The overall planning for the year is very well thought out and forms a balanced programme of studies at the children's level of understanding. They enjoy the peace of the Japanese garden outdoors and have fun in cooking foods typical of other lands, including eating with chopsticks in the Chinese play area. A display of dolls from other countries stimulates discussion about traditions and weather. They compare the celebration of light in various religious festivals.
- Welsh culture is richly celebrated through folk dancing, recitation of Welsh songs and rhymes, and presenting traditional Welsh folk tales through drama at the Saint David's Day celebration concert to the parents. They proudly wear their traditional Welsh or modern day rugby costume and are familiar with the daffodil as a Welsh emblem and the Welsh dragon flag.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

Children's behaviour is very good and is a significant factor in contributing to the good quality of life in the school as well as having a positive effect on the children's learning and progress.

- Children settle well into the school and benefit greatly from the policy of being in the pastoral care of one particular adult. They quickly become confident in their surroundings and in the routine of the school day.
- Their standards of behaviour reflect the caring and sharing ethos of the school and they respond well to the rules needed for an orderly school community.
- Visitors to the school are treated politely and with courtesy, as are other children and adults at the school.
- The very good planning and organisation of activities and time, together with the good quality and quantity of resources and accommodation, ensure that the children are interested and alert throughout the day.
- Parents are very happy with the standards of behaviour, both at the school and during various outings to places of interest in the locality and further afield.
- Where there is any incident of unacceptable behaviour it is dealt with quickly and sensitively and children make suitable apologies; there were no significant incidences during the inspection period.

4.3 Attendance

Pupils' attendance levels are satisfactory.

- The school's rate of attendance during the spring and summer terms 2001 fell below 90 per cent because of illnesses.
- Parents understand the procedures for reporting absences and consequently, there are no unauthorised absences.

- Registers are marked regularly and are completed appropriately. The school is progressing satisfactorily towards achieving a whole school attendance rate of 91-92 per cent.
- Children arrive in school on time and punctuality throughout the day is good.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching was very good in 27 per cent of the sessions observed and good in 73 per cent.

- The overall quality of teaching is very good and enables the children to make substantial progress, especially in key skills across the areas of learning. The staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning and provide very good support for the children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in the six areas of learning. Staff intervention during sessions is of high quality and is successful in promoting children's learning, especially language development.
- Weekly and daily planning is very effective and clearly identifies learning objectives, linked to the Desirable Outcomes. Staff evaluate the teaching and learning and plan the next stages in the children's learning. They have high expectations and set challenging and interesting tasks to develop children's learning skills. The activities often consolidate previous learning and encourage children to participate in discussion through practical exploration and investigation.
- Work is well matched to the needs of children, with appropriate tasks set for them to work as individuals, pairs or groups. All children are encouraged to choose and plan their own learning activities, thus promoting independence. They are provided with very good support, including those with SEN, whose needs are addressed in line with the targets in the IEPs.
- Sessions are well organised; staff manage the children well and have very good relationships with them. They use effective strategies to promote good behaviour and encourage positive attitudes amongst the children to their work. A good range of teaching techniques and organisational strategies are used effectively for different activities and purposes. The 'Thank you time' sessions are particularly effective and are used well to develop personal and social skills and language skills.
- The assessment and recording procedures are very good and assessment opportunities are used well to monitor progress and obtain information for future planning.

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

The quality of assessment, recording and reporting on the children's progress is very good. It is effective in raising standards and in ensuring that all children make significant progress during their time at the school.

- The school makes very good use of the Four Counties Foundation profile to assess and record the basic achievements and needs of each child on entry to the school. The booklet

is useful for recording the children's progress during their time at the school. Regular recording of progress in this booklet clearly shows the value added by the school to the children's progress.

- The results of all assessments are analysed carefully and inform the planning for all children, including those identified with SEN.
- There are clearly identified targets that show development and progress in every activity planned by the teachers, and regular observation of each child's progress quickly identifies any emergent lack of progress. Teachers record this in their short term planning and the child is supported appropriately.
- There are three written reports to the parents in a school year and the comments on these reports are of very good quality and indicate how well each child's progress is monitored. The section on the way forward is particularly useful as it identifies how home and school can work together on one prioritised area. The subsequent report indicates how well the child has progressed within this area.
- There are opportunities for parents to discuss the written reports with the staff at the school and there are very good links with the parents which keep them well informed on their child's progress.
- The detailed planning of activities ensures progression and continuity in children's learning, from when they enter the nursery to when they leave to attend the reception class at the adjacent primary school.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is very good.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and successfully promotes the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
- There are effective schemes of work for the half-termly themes 'What's in the Box'. In addition, there are schemes of work for each area of learning which support the themes. They are detailed and provide useful guidelines for teacher's planning. The quality of curriculum planning is very good and learning objectives are clearly focused on the skills, knowledge and understanding which the children are to acquire in each activity.
- A range of very good quality experiences are organised for children which are enjoyable, interesting and stimulating, and which successfully promote their skills of speaking and listening, enquiry and exploration.
- All children, including those with SEN, have full access to the curriculum and benefit well from the inclusive nature of the school.
- Personal and social development is well integrated through the curriculum and is a strength of the school. Parents confirm that their children respond particularly well to this aspect and appreciate the school's success in increasing children's confidence. Good use is made of home/school tasks to consolidate and extend children's learning. Parents are encouraged to support their children with the tasks and through sharing books which they choose at the weekly BEAR club.
- The curriculum is planned and organised around the a collection of themes 'What's in the Box', through a range of activities within each area of learning, which effectively promote and develop children's independence, ability to take responsibility and to use personal initiative. Key skills are planned for each area and are constantly re-inforced across all activities.

- The quality of curriculum planning is very good. The staff work very effectively as a team to evaluate the previous week's work, including children's assessments. Results of evaluations are carefully analysed and information is fed back into the planning.
- Teachers and nursery nurses share the responsibilities for the four pastoral groups and ensure focused adult intervention in children's learning. This more focused learning, especially during 'target times,' is particularly successful in developing the skills of speaking, listening, numeracy and personal and social skills.
- Cwricwlwm Cymreig is successfully promoted across the curriculum such as through the use of incidental Welsh and an understanding of Welsh culture, as in the celebration of St. David's Day. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for children to undertake educational visits both locally and further afield, such as the train journeys to Cardiff to visit The Millennium Stadium and to go ice skating.

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The quality of the provision for the support, guidance and welfare of children is very good.

- The staff know the children very well and are committed to the children's well being and are sensitive to their needs. All procedures for the supervision of children are appropriate.
- Staff have very good relationships with children whom they value and treat with understanding and respect. As a result, children feel happy, secure and confident to turn to staff when they need help. They are keen to attend school where they feel secure and welcome in very attractive surroundings.
- The school has very good arrangements for children's personal and educational guidance. Records of assessment to support their academic and pastoral development are carefully compiled. Children benefit from the school's positive and purposeful ethos and caring and orderly environment.
- Staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour and the policy on behaviour is very effective and consistently applied by all staff. This helps create a calm and purposeful atmosphere which promotes the development of self-discipline.
- Absence is carefully monitored by the headteacher and any absence is consistently followed up. Parents readily comply with the school's request to inform the school when their child is ill.
- The school has effective measures for Child Protection. The headteacher is the designated member of staff to deal with any incidents that may arise. All staff are aware of the procedures. There is appropriate liaison with various outside agencies and other specialists.
- The school is successful in promoting children's health, safety and well-being. The induction process takes account of the needs of the children and their parents. The school ensures that parents and children are aware of established routines so that the children feel secure. Good levels of support and educational guidance are provided to ensure that children's transition from the nursery to primary school is smooth.
- The school has a clear commitment and awareness of inclusive education as reflected in their policy on Equal Opportunities. The school provides very good opportunities for multicultural education, support for children with learning difficulties and addresses gender issues.
- There are clear guidelines in the Health and Safety policy. The procedures for first aid, recording accidents and informing parents are very good. The routine for fire drill is

known and understood by all staff. Some of the staff are in the process of updating their first aid qualifications.

- A risk assessment is regularly undertaken and all necessary checks on fire appliances and electrical equipment are up to date.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

The quality of provision for children with SEN is very good. Children respond very well to the support provided and make good progress towards set targets.

- There are currently three children on the school's SEN register, two at Stage 2 and one at Stage 3.
- There is a comprehensive policy for SEN which complies with the requirements of the Code of Practice. It gives clear guidance to all those involved in the SEN procedures and contains information about the school's provision for equality of opportunity and inclusion.
- The headteacher is the special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who successfully monitors the implementation of the policy and children's progress. There is a named governor for SEN who provides good support to the SENCO and takes a special interest in developments.
- A nursery nurse is employed for one day a week to provide support for the children on the SEN register and others who require extra help. This support is very effective in developing children's fine motor skills and language and numeracy skills.
- Children's IEPs are appropriate and have achievable targets. They make very good progress towards the targets set in the IEPs. There are very good systems for identifying and assessing the needs of children with SEN. The quality of planning is good and realistic targets are set for children to achieve. Tasks are differentiated to cater for the needs of individual children. Targets in the IEPs are reviewed termly and detailed records are kept of children's progress. Parents are kept informed of procedures and are encouraged to support their children's learning.
- There is effective liaison between the SENCO, the staff and outside agencies. There is a strong liaison between the pre-school Sure Start initiative for parents and children and the nursery. Support is provided for parents and children identified with SEN which strengthens the liaison between home and the school.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

The partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions is very good.

- Statements in the school's documents emphasise the need for parents to be involved in their children's education and work in partnership with staff.
- The school has established good systems to provide information for parents. These include an informative school prospectus, regular letters, a parents' notice board, a pre-school brochure and a home school agreement. Parents receive an annual report from the headteacher, termly reports from the Management Panel and detailed reports on their children's progress.

- Parents are invited to curriculum meetings to explain the theme at the start of each term. A Link-Up Group for pre-school children meets during the term prior to starting at the nursery, which successfully eases the child's first transition from home to school.
- Parents are very active in raising funds for the school, through sales of videos, sponsored events, the lottery bonus ball and family discos. They help in the school by reading stories, displaying work, sewing, craft and computer work. School performances, such as the St David's Day concert, Mothers' Day celebration, Christmas concert, sports day and family fun nights, are well attended by parents.
- As well as participating in first aid courses and numeracy and computer skills training, parents, including parent governors, have also formed a Christmas choir. Some parents are involved in school initiatives, such as promoting an awareness of the multicultural nature of the locality by having a Chinese and a Japanese week and helping to maintain the school's Japanese garden.
- Links with the community are very strong. Children visit the local library, churches, chapels and residential homes. They participate in local litter picking groups, visit shops and sites of historical interest. Links have been made with the local magazine (The Headway News), charities, Merthyr in Bloom display and the Aberfan Trust Fund.
- Local visitors to the school include religious leaders, police liaison officer, senior citizens, charity workers, health visitor and councillors. A local gardener visits the school on a regular basis to help the children to plant shrubs and bedding plants. Local people are invited to various school activities.
- Very good links have been established with the local primary schools to which the children transfer. These include transition visits for children, pre-school meetings for parents and the transfer of children's assessment and progress reports. Other nursery schools, infant and primary schools visit the school to exchange ideas and discuss themes. The four LEA nursery schools meet to discuss early years assessments.
- There are strong links with the National Museum of Wales and the school appreciates the loan of artefacts to support topic work which enhance children's learning.
- The school provides placements for nursery nurse and child care training students from a further education institute and also work experience for secondary school pupils. Other links include LEA advisers and officers, Careers Wales, Learndirect, ELWa, European Community, RSPCA and the Community Centre.

5.7 Partnership with industry

The school's partnership with industry is good.

- Useful visits have been made to a garden centre, local businesses, shops and a locomotive depot. These visits have enhanced the children's learning and appreciation of the world of work.
- Visitors to the school from the world of work such as an upholsterer, RSPCA officer and a painter support the children's early years programme. The school's policy and strategies on links with industry are effective.
- The Education and Business Partnership agency has funded personnel from a tax office to visit the school every fortnight to promote language skills. ELWa is funding the future visits of staff members to a computer centre.
- Businesses such as banks, a local waste product site, shops, supermarkets, factories and a garden centre have made generous donations to the school.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good. The evaluation system used by the school is effective in identifying areas for improvement and to plan future developments.

- The self-evaluation system provides a clear framework for evaluating performance and quality, which is used alongside monitoring procedures. The self-evaluation model is referred to as CRIS: Celebrate, Refine, Improve and Support. Key areas for improvement are identified from performance indicators and are built into the SDP, giving a clear focus for self-evaluation and school improvement.
- A data analysis is carried out of baseline assessments and school-based assessments and appropriate targets for improvement are set and incorporated into the SDP. Measurable and quantitative targets have been set to improve standards in literacy, numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world, personal and social development and the use of incidental Welsh.
- The action plans in the SDP are effective in moving the school forwards. Each action plan has clear goals, success criteria, organisation implications for staff, initial and development actions and time schedules. The plans are reviewed regularly by the staff and governors to improve the quality of provision in order to raise standards.
- The school has effective procedures for monitoring the progress made towards achieving its targets through monitoring children's learning and the quality of teaching. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the school has met the targets in its post inspection action plan to improve curricular provision and standards of achievement.
- Monitoring procedures are effective in improving children's levels of involvement and adult interaction. Evidence is collected, reports are written and findings are discussed as a staff. Areas for development, including staff training, are identified and incorporated in the SDP.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

The quality of leadership and management of the school is very good. The school's vision statement, aims and values promote a caring ethos and give a clear sense of purpose and direction for the school.

- The school has clear aims, including a commitment to inclusion and equal opportunity for all, which is successfully promoted by staff and governors. They succeed in achieving the school's aims by providing a caring, secure environment in which children feel valued and encouraged to achieve their full potential.
- The headteacher has a full-time teaching commitment and provides very good leadership and support for the staff in improving the educational provision and standards of achievement. The school has implemented an effective self-evaluation procedure, which includes monitoring to improve the quality of teaching, curriculum provision and standards of achievement.

- There is a management panel which comprises of members of the school community who are very supportive of the school. They are well informed and understand their roles in supporting the school.
- The school aims to maintain and improve the standards of achievement and the quality of educational provision by setting targets in the SDP and through the process of self-evaluation. The school has effective procedures to monitor and evaluate progress towards the implementation of targets. The current targets focus on raising standards of children's language and numeracy skills and their personal and social development.
- The SDP is an effective working document which identifies appropriate priorities and targets. The school ensures that the budget relates efficiently to its educational priorities in the SDP over a three-year period.
- The LEA administers the school's budget and the school has a capitation budget which is efficiently administered. The LEA's finance department provides appropriate advice and support. The management panel monitors spending and progress towards achieving targets.
- The school manages its resources efficiently and reinforces the aims of the school, ensuring very good value for money.
- The headteacher and part-time clerk undertake administration tasks to ensure the efficient day-to-day running of the school.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are very good overall.

- The school is well staffed with two qualified teachers and two nursery nurses. The accommodation is very good and is purpose built for the needs of this age group. The quality and quantity of learning resources are very good. All resources, including the use of the local area and the skills and knowledge of parents and others in the community, are very well used.
- All the staff are suitably qualified, are effectively deployed and work very well together. They share responsibility effectively and smoothly for the two pastoral groups, in line with school organisation and provide support for smaller groups. The stability in the staffing adds significantly to the continuity of the planning and organisation of the school. Their initial qualifications are regularly updated through suitable training courses.
- The indoor accommodation is generous and allows for a full range of meaningful and rich experiences.
- Displays of children's work and stimulating resources to support the learning are very attractively displayed and the school is clean and well maintained.
- Resources for learning are of very good quality and are conveniently stored within the various learning bays around the school and thus are accessible to the children. The activities are planned to include all rooms in the school and the children understand the routines involved. The resources cover the needs of all six areas of learning for achieving the Desirable Outcomes.

- There is good outdoor provision including two covered outdoor areas where the children can play during wet weather. The grounds contain a hard surface area marked out for a range of activities, a grassed area with various interesting objects to stimulate the children's imagination and a peaceful and attractive Japanese garden. Outdoor wheeled toys are adequately resourced and suitably stored. There is a lack of suitable climbing equipment for the development of children's physical skills. The school is in the process of improving outdoor facilities including the installation of a safety play surface area.
- The outside paintwork of the accommodation is in a poor state of decoration but the school management panel are taking steps in conjunction with the LEA to rectify this matter.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by children

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Children make very good progress in language, literacy and communication skills. The staff have a good knowledge and understanding of how children learn and develop; this is apparent in the imaginative and exciting activities arranged daily to promote children's language experiences.
- On entry to the school many of the children's language and communication skills are not well developed and their communication is mainly to express simple personal needs or experiences. They use short phrases or one or two words to communicate these needs. A cohort of children enter the school each term, at first for part time, and there are two stages during a school year when they transfer to the reception class in the next school. The progress made and the standards achieved by all the children in their language and communication skills during their time in the nursery is very good.
- Standards in listening are very good. They listen fully to all that they are told by the staff and listen increasingly attentively to what other children have to say. Their answers and their own questions in response show that they reflect on what they hear.
- They speak with increasing confidence and with clarity and they use a good range of vocabulary according to the subject under discussion. They respond very well to opportunities to speak aloud in concerts as individuals or groups in whole school performances. They know and recite a very good and varied range of songs, rhymes and action songs in both English and Welsh, and their pronunciation is good in both languages.
- They delight in performing parts of stories by learning repeated parts from a favourite story and the older children perform traditional Welsh folk tales to the parents in concerts. Their drama skills are very well developed and include miming, conveying emotion or character portrayal through physical movements and facial expression.

- Picture books are enjoyed mostly with an adult or as a shared pleasure with other children. They know that books have interesting stories and information. The school has a weekly book club where children and their parents select a book for shared enjoyment at home. Parents are encouraged to comment on their child's reaction to the book as well as being guided on the best way to enjoy this shared experience.
- The children know the name, shape and sound of letters and use initial letters to help read whole words.
- Emergent writing skills are developed through meaningful experiences such as writing letters in the post office corner. They concentrate well on this activity and can 'read' their letter to an adult at a much later date from when it was first composed. The teachers show appreciation and praise for all the children's activities and write down with the child what has been said. The children's letters written in response to a particular activity are posted to the relevant person and they are delighted when they receive a reply.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Personal and social development

Standards of achievement in all aspects of the children's personal and social development are very good.

Good features

- The children settle into the school well and respond quickly to the caring and sharing atmosphere created by the staff. They respond to the encouragement and praise from staff and show respect towards others and towards the play resources provided.
- They co-operate well and share resources fairly. The daily routine is quickly understood and the children move around the school quietly and safely. They play outside happily and show due care for the needs of others.
- Their understanding of health and safety in relation to themselves and others is very good and they discuss the importance of medicine being taken only when ill, even though it has an attractive taste. They take responsibility for their own personal hygiene. The milk and fruit sessions are courteous and pleasant occasions when individual children offer food and are thanked by others.
- The children's attitude towards new experiences, including taking part in visits in the locality and further afield, is positive and they are developing inquiring minds.
- They respond eagerly to the opportunity to learn Welsh and are achieving very good standards in singing and reciting to an audience, as well as for pleasure in school. They have a good range of vocabulary and can greet others and answer questions in Welsh in response to known patterns.
- They take pride in their own achievements and are pleased to share in the achievements of others.
- They are developing a very good understanding of other cultures through a well planned programme of meaningful activities which are woven into their experiences. They learn

and appreciate that there are similarities and differences in the ways of life of people within their village, Wales and different countries.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Mathematical development

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- The provision of a wide range of practical activities promotes children's understanding of mathematical concepts. They use mathematics as an integral part of many activities, such as playing in the home-play areas and the post office, building with bricks and construction equipment, cooking and sand and water play. They use mathematical language appropriately when sorting by colour, size, shape and quantity.
- They can successfully sort and classify items bought in the local shops. They investigate 'What's in the box?' and correctly sort the items according to given criteria, giving reasons for their choice. They can count to 10 in English and in Welsh and recognise and name numbers to five. During discussion about their name cards, they count the number of letters in each name and accurately demonstrate the number on the large abacus by moving the corresponding number of beads. They make comparisons of the positions of the beads and observe which is the shortest name, the longest name and which are the same.
- They enjoy singing a range of number rhymes, action songs and number jingles in English and in Welsh. They sing them with enthusiasm and demonstrate their knowledge of number by joining in the actions and counting games.
- Children are developing their understanding of practical mathematics through shopping activities using money, at the local shops and in the school post office; they are familiar with weighing and measuring ingredients in cooking activities; they compare quantities during sand and water play and are aware of 2-D and 3-D shapes during play activities.
- Their knowledge of shapes is very good; they successfully match shapes and recognise and name basic 2-D shapes and 3-D shapes. They can accurately name the shapes they use to make collage pictures and wooden shapes pictures. Whilst investigating 'What's in the box?' they accurately name the 3-D shapes and describe their faces, edges and corners. They compare their sizes, colours and their properties; they know which shapes can roll or slide and whether they are made of wood or plastic.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Children develop a very good knowledge and understanding of the world around them through well structured activities to enable them to explore, investigate and discuss. They are familiar with the local area, as a result of frequent walks in the village. They describe geographical features such as the river Taff, the railway, the mountains, fields, buildings, shops, chapels and community centres. They name the different shops and clearly describe the items which can be bought in them. They enjoy visits to the café and the local library and recall details of their visits. They develop a knowledge and understanding of places further afield through their journeys on the train to Cardiff to visit the Millennium Stadium and to go ice-skating. They make clear comparisons between features of the city and their own village.
- Children have a very good understanding of road safety rules, following a talk by the Road Safety Officer. They know how to cross a road safely, and during their village walks, they cross a zebra crossing appropriately and observe the use of traffic lights at road works and recognise various road signs. Whilst playing in their 'Men at Work' role-play activity, they explain why they wear hard hats and remind each other of the importance of safety at work. They explain clearly the difference between a gas pipe which is yellow and a water pipe which is blue and demonstrate how to join pipes together.
- Children make good progress in learning ICT skills. They make good attempts to control the mouse to select and move objects on the screen. Many children confidently use the computer independently, choosing the program and responding well to instructions. Staff ensure that programs support the development of early skills in language, mathematics and art in an enjoyable way to increase children's confidence. They competently use a tape recorder to play tapes and join in songs, and a listening centre to listen to stories and rhymes.
- Children have a good knowledge of living things found in their school garden and the Japanese garden. They recognise various plants and mini-beasts. They grow bulbs and seeds, indoors and outside and make close observations of their growth. Good opportunities are provided for children to make detailed observations of species such as frogspawn. They understand and clearly describe the development of the tadpoles into frogs.
- Children are inquisitive about the world around them and constantly ask questions. They work well together during science investigations, in role-play situations and with toys. They investigate the contents of a first aid box and know the names of its contents and their uses. They explore models of an eye, a heart and a brain and describe where each is found in the body and its main function. They enjoy matching the hand skeleton to images on the light table. The staff use their skills well and are always at hand to promote conversation and develop children's interests, knowledge and understanding.
- Children have a range of opportunities to prepare and cook food. They have good regard for hygiene and wash hands independently before handling food. When making pizzas children show good knowledge of different types of ingredients. Sessions are well prepared which effectively use opportunities to develop children's vocabulary, mathematics and understanding of health and safety issues.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Physical development

Standards of achievement are very good overall and the children are making very good progress in their manipulative skills and in their physical control and mobility skills.

Good features

- An exciting range of activities is provided for children and they are developing very good control over a wide range of manipulative skills. They concentrate very well in all these activities involving crayons, paint, scissors and glue and they are encouraged to take their time to ensure that their work is the best they can achieve.
- Children are taught in small groups and this ensures that each child is supported, encouraged, helped and supervised so that all work is important and significant to them. They are proud of their achievement in these fine motor skills and this encourages them to set high standards for themselves at this early age.
- Construction kits are designed to provide different skills in joining and dismantling structures and, again, this activity is closely supported by staff. The skilful teaching involves talking through the processes and methods which in turn extends the children's understanding of these skills.
- Children pedal, push, pull and steer a range of outdoor wheeled toys competently and show respect towards others, and good sense, when using these vehicles. They know and understand some aspects of road safety.
- They run, skip, hop and stop with good control and their understanding of competitive sport is developing well. The year's activities culminate in a school sports day where video evidence shows very good standards in team work and in effort.
- Their physical development through dance is very good. They learn and perform simple folk dances and vary the steps, keep to the musical patterns and remember up to six or more sequences within a particular dance. Their performance in music and movement is very good and their actions in response to the music are creative and imaginative. They respond very well to a range of recorded music, including classical and modern. They cover a varied range of portrayal of characters, emotions and events, and combine their own interpretation with that of the other children.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings but children's gross motor skills of jumping, landing, sliding, swinging and balancing are less well developed at present due to their lack of regular use of appropriate climbing equipment.

Creative development

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Children explore colour through painting and printing patterns using two or three colours to produce effective patterns. They create attractive paintings, choosing paint colours well and using brushes confidently to fill the space on the paper.
- They explore line by using pencils, crayons and felt pens to draw patterns and observation drawings of a sunflower and their own portraits. Their figure drawings are developing well with recognisable features of the face and body.
- Children confidently enjoy making printed patterns. They use a variety of tools and paint to produce effective patterns. When printing with shapes they can name the 2-D shapes they have used.
- They explore texture through making collage pictures. A variety of media and textures are used to produce figures and effective friezes, such as ‘The Ugly Duckling’ and a spring collage picture. They make effective mobiles of spiders and fish and use their cutting and sticking skills well. Children confidently use playdough to create models and shapes using cutters and tools skilfully.
- Children appreciate the work of famous artists and make close observations of the work of Van Gogh. They make good attempts to experiment with paint and colour to produce the desired effect in their own paintings.
- In music, they enjoy singing a variety of songs and nursery rhymes. They sing in tune with clear diction in English and in Welsh and join in with actions and clapping rhythms with enthusiasm. They explore sounds and instruments to create their own music. They name instruments correctly and confidently demonstrate to the rest of the group how they are played. They know which instruments are shakers, clappers or ringers. They know the difference between loud and quiet sounds.
- Children enjoy role-play activities and drama, which are effective in developing their imaginative and creative abilities. They respond well to music and movement sessions and listen carefully to the music and instructions, moving creatively in time with the music.

Shortcomings

- Children’s work in three dimensions is underdeveloped.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

The school was inspected in 1997 and produced an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection report.

Key Issue 1

‘Strive to maintain the overall good quality of educational provision in the school especially in the areas of language and personal and social development.’

- The school analysed elements of good practice and identified areas for further development. The monitoring system was implemented to evaluate practice and standards.
- The school’s self-assessment report 2001/2 states that progress in each target has been monitored closely as an integral part of the self-evaluation process.
- The current inspection found standards in language, literacy and communication skills and standards in personal and social development to be very good.

Key Issue 2

‘Update the present curriculum planning framework to meet the requirements of the Desirable Outcomes for Children’s Learning and the corresponding assessment procedures.’

- The existing schemes of work were reviewed and revised in line with the Desirable Outcomes and the LEA assessment procedures were implemented.
- The school’s self-assessment report 2001/2 states that all curriculum documentation has been updated in line with the Desirable Outcomes.
- The current inspection found that curriculum documentation is of very good quality and successfully promotes the Desirable Outcomes.

Key Issue 3

‘Continue to review the staff intervention strategies particularly in the imaginative, role play and creative areas thus ensuring that staff support these activities.’

- Existing provision and practice were reviewed and areas for development were identified. A programme of training was arranged.
- The school’s self-assessment report 2001/2 states that intervention in role play areas continues to be difficult but is addressed through the introduction of a designated language day.
- During the current inspection it was noted that staff interaction with children was of very high quality in all areas of learning.

Key Issue 4

‘Within the context of the overall good curriculum provision which exists in the school, further focus upon:

1. developing IT skills

- IT practice and provision were reviewed and training was provided for staff.
- The school’s self-assessment report 2001/2 states that ICT skills are given a much higher status and are integrated into the planning.
- The current inspection found that children achieve high standards in the use of ICT skills.

2. the development of gross motor skills especially for older children

- The organisation of outdoor play areas was reviewed and a more structured timetable was implemented.
- The school's self-assessment report 2001/2 states that the development of older children's physical skills has been enhanced by the use of an 'Ideas Flow Chart'.
- The current inspection found that children's gross motor skills of climbing, swinging, balancing, jumping and landing are underdeveloped through the lack of the regular use of appropriate equipment.

3. the use of incidental Welsh

- Opportunities to develop the use of incidental Welsh were identified. Training was provided for staff and support was provided by athrawon bro.
- The school self-assessment report 2001/2 states that incidental Welsh is used daily at registration sessions and throughout the day. An assessment target sheet is used to assess progress and has been incorporated into the target setting system.
- The current inspection found that children's use of incidental Welsh is very good.

4. encourage the handling and enjoyment of books by children

- The book corners were reorganised, a box of special resources was introduced and staff were made aware of pre-reading skills in the scheme of work. The children's use of the book corners was monitored.
- The school's self-assessment report 2001/2 states that books are used across the curriculum, especially on the weekly Language Day.
- The current inspection found that the provision of books and pre-reading opportunities are very good and children enjoy looking at books and sharing them with others.

5. employing a wider range of media in art and craft activities.'

- The provision was reviewed, new resources were purchased and training was provided for staff.
- The school's self-assessment report 2001/2 states that a designated collage, clay and dough area has been established in the creative area and staff plan for the teaching of specific skills in this area of learning.
- The current inspection found that there is a wide range of media available for children to explore texture and to create collage pictures. The use of mixed media for 3-D work is underdeveloped.

8.2 Key issues for action

- To maintain the high standards achieved by the children, the school needs to address the minor shortcomings in physical and creative development.

Acknowledgement

The registered inspector and team wish to thank the governors, headteacher, staff and pupils for their co-operation and courtesy before and during the inspection.

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Ynysowen Nursery School
School type	Nursery
Age –range of pupils	3-4
Address of school	Aberfan Merthyr Tydfil
Post-Code	CF48 4NT
Telephone Number	01443 690596

Headteacher	Mrs Brenda Morgan
Date of appointment	November 1992
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Mrs Sheila Lewis
Registered Inspector	Mrs M E Evans
Dates of inspection	18-19 March 2002

B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	32.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32.5

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	2	-	2

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	8:1
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	1:1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>				
	N	KS1	KS2	Whole School
Term 1	89	-	-	89
Term 2	91	-	-	91
Term 3	85	-	-	85

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	56%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

C. Evidence base of the inspection

The inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors who spent a total of five inspector days at the school.

Before the inspection:

- meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, the school management panel and with the parents; 17 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting;
- questionnaires were distributed to all parents and the 38 completed questionnaires were analysed; the inspection team took note of the results, including three further additional submissions;
- school documentation was examined.

During the inspection:

- evidence of sessions observed was based on approximately 14 hours of the inspection of the nursery in a total of 34 sessions;
- discussions were held with the headteacher, class teachers, nursery nurses and non-teaching staff about their roles and responsibilities;
- discussions were held with the children about aspects of their work and life in school;
- a scrutiny was made of a sample of the children's work as well as work in the classroom and on display around the school.

After the inspection:

- meetings were held with the headteacher, the staff and the management panel to provide oral feedback on the inspection findings.

D. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs M E Evans Registered Inspector	Mathematical development Knowledge and understanding of the world Creative development	Main Findings Standards of achievement Standards in key skills Quality of teaching Curriculum Support, guidance and pupils' welfare SEN Quality of self-evaluation Leadership and efficiency Progress since the last inspection Key Issues
Mrs M E Hughes Team Inspector	Language, literacy and communication skills Personal and social development Physical development	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Behaviour and attitudes Assessment, recording and reporting Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr K Lewis Lay Inspector		Attendance Partnership with parents and the Community Partnership with industry