

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

**A report on the quality of education in**

**Ysgol-y-Graig Primary School  
Brewery Lane  
Cefn Coed  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF48 2LR**

**School number: 6752330**

**Date of inspection: 23 November 2009**

**by**

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## Introduction

Ysgol-y-Graig Primary School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Ysgol-y-Graig Primary School took place between 23/11/09 and 25/11/09. An independent team of inspectors, led by Peter Mathias undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)). The table below shows the terms that Estyn uses and a broad idea of their meaning. The table is for guidance only.

<b>Nearly all</b>	with very few exceptions
<b>Most</b>	90% or more
<b>Many</b>	70% or more
<b>A majority</b>	over 60%
<b>Half/around half</b>	close to 50%
<b>A minority</b>	below 40%
<b>Few</b>	below 20%
<b>Very few</b>	less than 10%

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

<b>Grade 1</b>	good with outstanding features
<b>Grade 2</b>	good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Grade 3</b>	good features outweigh shortcomings
<b>Grade 4</b>	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
<b>Grade 5</b>	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 **standard** inspection.

## Year groups and key stages

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

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who 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	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol-y-Graig is a community primary school situated in the village of Cefn Coed which is on the northern edge of Merthyr Tydfil and is the local authority (LA). Nearly all pupils come from the local area which is considered largely economically disadvantaged.
2. The school provides education for boys and girls between the ages of four and 11. There are six mainstream classes and a resource base for key stage 2 (KS2) pupils who have moderate learning difficulties and one class for pupils with severe learning difficulties. There are 166 pupils on roll from reception year to year (Y) 6. School numbers have fallen considerably since the time of the last inspection in October 2003.
3. Approximately 28% of pupils are considered eligible for free school meals, which is just above the LA average of 26.3% and above the All-Wales average of 17.5%.
4. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and broadly on entry to the reception, have below average basic skills.
5. Ninety-seven per cent of pupils have English as a first language and no pupil has Welsh as the language of the home. Some 96% of pupils are of Welsh heritage and the remainder come from a range of cultural backgrounds.
6. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN). However, about 30% of pupils are considered to have some degree of SEN. No pupil has the National Curriculum (NC) disapplied. One boy was temporarily excluded in the last school year. Four pupils are 'looked after' by the LA. The school holds the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark (2), the British Waterways National Award, the Eco-Schools' Green Flag Award and the Eco-Schools Award 2008.

### The School's Aims

7. The school's aims are wide and appropriate.
8. The school's mission statement is, "Opening eyes, developing minds, changing lives".

### The school's priorities and targets

9. The school's priorities and targets for 2009-2010 are to:
  - work towards the new basic skills' quality standard;
  - raise standards in English and mathematics;
  - develop pupils' writing skills so that pupils become competent writers;
  - secure consistency of teaching by embedding a common approach in all classes;
  - improve the standards of learning for the more able and talented pupils;
  - review the practice of provision mapping to ensure quality resources;
  - review the role of the class teacher and subject leader in order to provide quality teaching, and
  - complete a local schools' transition plan for KS2.

## Summary

10. Ysgol-y-Graig Primary School is a good school. The headteacher provides an inspirational lead to the rest of the teaching and non-teaching staff and sets a very positive and constructive ethos. The school has made good progress since its last inspection in October 2003.

### Table of grades awarded

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

11. The inspection team agreed with five of the seven judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report (and about the standards it has achieved in other areas of its work). The grade awarded for Key Question 4 was one grade below that given by the school and the grade awarded for Key Question 5 was one grade above. This is because while the school cares well for its pupils and those with additional learning needs have outstanding provision, overall there were insufficient outstanding features in this key question to justify the highest grade. In Key Question 5, the quality of leadership and management shown, particularly by the headteacher, has many outstanding features to support the highest grade. The Grade 1 given to Key Question 5 does not match the Grade 2 given to Key Question 1 and Key Question 7. This is because the overall impact of the way the headteacher provides an outstanding clear sense of direction and promotes high standards in all aspects of the life of the school, is a major factor in the school's success.
12. Most children begin school with below the expected levels of basic skills. Nearly all make good progress and are well prepared by the age of eleven for the next phase of their education. Nearly all meet or exceed the predictions made for them at the ages of seven and eleven. Across the school pupils with SEN including those in the KS2 resource base and those who are identified as able and talented make good progress.
13. In the end of the 2009 KS1 national teacher assessments for seven year olds, the proportion of pupils attaining at least the expected level (Level 2) in English was below the LA and national averages. In mathematics and science results were above these averages. The combined results were almost the same as those of the LA and just below the national averages. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) was very high in English and well above these averages in mathematics and science.
14. In these assessments girls scored below boys whereas in previous years girls have out-performed boys in these KS1 national assessments.

15. In the national teacher assessments for 2009 for eleven year olds, the proportion of pupils attaining at least the expected level (Level 4) in English, mathematics and science was below the LA and national averages. The combined results were also below as was the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 5). In these assessments girls out-performed boys as they have done over recent years.
16. When these results are compared to schools which have a similar proportion of pupils considered eligible for free school meals (24%-32%), the results in all three subjects were above those of similar schools at KS1. In contrast the KS2 results were well below. Since 2005 KS1 results have been generally above the LA and national averages and the KS2 results have been below. The overall trend of improvement is positive. When these results are compared to those of the family of schools across Wales to which the school belongs, results at the end of KS2 were below those of most of these schools.
17. Care should be taken when considering these results because the school admits a significant number of pupils into KS2 who attend the centre for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. When these results are discounted, in 2009 the KS2 results of other pupils were just above the LA and just below in all subjects. The school met its targets in English and exceeded them in mathematics and science.
18. Overall, standards of achievement in the subjects and areas of learning inspected are as follows:-

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
24%	64%	12%	0%	0%

19. These figures are higher than those reported in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) Annual Report 2007/2008 (Primary) where standards were good or better in 84% of lessons with 12% being outstanding. These results represent a considerable improvement on those of the previous inspection where only 2% were Grade 1, 68% Grade 2 and 30% Grade 3.

#### **Areas of learning for under-fives**

	<b>Reception</b>
Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural development	1
Language, literacy and communication skills	1
Welsh language development	2
Mathematical development	2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	1
Physical development	2
Creative development	1

20. The overall quality of provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the children make good progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes.

### Grades for standards in subjects inspected in key stage 1 and key stage 2

	KS1	KS2
English	2	2
Welsh second language	2	2
Mathematics	2	2
Science	2	2
History	2	2

21. Standards and progress in the key skills of literacy and of communication in English have good features and no important shortcomings overall. In the Foundation Phase children speak and listen well. In KS1 and KS2 the skills of speaking and listening in other subjects are well developed. Most read confidently and accurately, a minority with good expression. In the Foundation Phase children have a clear understanding of how to form letters. However, in KS1 and KS2 pupils do not write sufficiently for a wide enough range of purposes in different styles and forms to reach good standards in other subjects. Across the school pupils' understanding of how to use the reference library in different subjects is limited.
22. In the key skills in communication in Welsh and in pupils' bilingual skills, standards are good with no important shortcomings. From the Foundation Phase where children learn to speak and listen well, pupils build successfully on what they already know and can do. However, in KS2 speaking skills have some shortcomings. Pupils' bilingual skills follow a similar pattern.
23. In the Foundation Phase mathematical skills are good with no important shortcomings. From the Foundation Phase many know how to compare, weigh and measure confidently. However in KS1 and KS2, mathematical skills across the curriculum are not consistently developed and nearly all pupils rarely apply what they have learnt outside their mathematics lessons.
24. Standards in the skills of using information and communications technology (ICT) are good with no important shortcomings. In the Foundation Phase children use simple programs in their play to reinforce their learning and to investigate. In KS1 and KS2, nearly all pupils apply their knowledge and understanding to carry out a wide range of activities.
25. Starting from the reception, by the age of 11 nearly all pupils have a good understanding of their Welsh culture, heritage and traditions.
26. A particular strength of the school is the outstanding way in which pupils' personal and social education (PSE) skills are developed and put into practice. This reflects the emphasis which is given across the school to these elements. Their willingness to work with others is also of a high quality and forms an outstanding feature. Across the school pupils' creative skills and their understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance are good with no important shortcomings.
27. Attendances at 90% are below the average for schools in Wales and lower than at the time of the previous inspection.

## The quality of education and training

### Grades for teaching

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
25%	61%	14%	0%	0%

28. These figures are close to the national picture reported by HMCI in the Annual Report 2007/2008 (Primary) where the quality of teaching was good or better, that is Grade 1 and Grade 2, in 83% of lessons. In this inspection 14% of lessons were Grade 3 in comparison to 17% Grade 3 or below nationally. These figures are a significant improvement on those of the last inspection when only 63% of lessons were Grade 2 or above and only 3% were Grade 1.
29. In the Foundation Phase the planning and organisation of a wide range of stimulating and innovative activities are in line with the Foundation Phase Outcomes. Across the school planning for those with SEN in the resource base and in other classes is nearly always detailed and effective. Planning for those who are identified as gifted and talented addresses their needs appropriately.
30. In the best lessons, which are found across the school but mainly in upper KS2, the outstanding features include:
- very well-judged questioning which tests and extends learning;
  - very positive encouragement to achieve well;
  - very expressive and lively introductions in which the objectives of the lessons are made very clear;
  - the provision of very stimulating resources which make the lessons very interesting for those involved;
  - very good examples of care and concern for pupils to emulate;
  - very efficient and effective use of learning support assistants;
  - outstanding subject knowledge;
  - very effective and relevant links between subjects;
  - thorough reviews of what has been learnt as a starting point for further learning in the following lessons, and
  - very well taken opportunities to promote incidental Welsh.
31. Where teaching had some shortcomings these were:
- lack of guidance about what was expected of the pupils;
  - tasks lacking sufficient challenge for all of the pupils present;
  - lessons overlong and lacking a sense of purpose, and
  - pupils experiencing difficulties not identified quickly and supported appropriately.
32. Arrangements for assessment meet statutory requirements. However, in some subjects there is insufficient indication in the policies and schemes of work of the standards pupils should aim to reach year on year and how the subjects should be taught. The school is working very closely with nearby schools including the local secondary school to which most pupils transfer in order to agree standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Collections of pupils' work have been assembled in these subjects as part of this process.

33. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the marking is nearly always constructive. However, the policy for marking is not used consistently across the key stages. Reports are of a good quality and meet statutory requirements.
34. The curriculum meets all legal requirements and the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. The school provides well for the learning needs of all of its pupils including those in the main school and in the resource base for those who have moderate learning difficulties and also for those who are identified as gifted and talented. The curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting and is carefully planned to match its provision to the recently revised NC.
35. Provision for spiritual moral, social and cultural development is very good and has many outstanding features. Provision for spiritual and moral development has particular strengths. Daily acts of collective worship are of a broadly Christian nature and meet legal requirements. All pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to take on responsibility and to understand their own responsibilities for their words and deeds.
36. There are very good arrangements to promote pupils' understanding and awareness of sustainable development and for the need to protect the environment. Pupils are given very good opportunities to learn about the world of trade and commerce and to recognise the need to be lifelong learners.
37. The quality of care, guidance and support provided for all pupils is good with no important shortcomings. The needs of every pupil are identified and supported effectively. Relationships across the school are very positive. Those with SEN are given very good support. The help and guidance given to pupils in the resource base is exceptional. There are detailed and extensive arrangements to promote pupils' health, safety and well-being including extensive and effective links with local support services.
38. The school council plays an important role in school life and all pupils have a growing awareness of the democratic process. All pupils, including those with SEN, are treated equally and have the same opportunities as others to be included in all school activities.
39. There are detailed arrangements to review pupils' behaviour, punctuality and attendance. A thorough review and survey of the school site have been conducted in order to consider its accessibility for those with physical disability. As a result of these activities the school has in place a detailed disability policy and action plan.

### **Leadership and management**

40. The headteacher provides a very strong and purposeful lead and has achieved very much through the very high expectations which he has been set for the school over a long period. The school's mission statement is put into full effect in the everyday life of the school and informs all of its actions. There is a very positive, caring ethos and commitment to provide the best possible education for all pupils. Teachers work co-operatively and willingly together and form a very strong and mutually supportive team.
41. The Foundation Phase and the resource base for pupils with moderate learning difficulties are both very well managed. The headteacher and all of the senior

management team carry out their individual duties very conscientiously. Arrangements for the senior management team to ensure the quality of teaching and learning and to link that with the professional development of all staff is good. Teachers are well informed about the strengths and areas for development in their fields of responsibility. The school has made good progress in addressing nearly all of the national priorities and local initiatives.

42. The governing body is well informed and active. The chair provides a very experienced and committed lead. Relationships between the governing body and the professional leadership of the school are strong and built around mutual trust and respect. Financial management is well organised and spending is carefully targeted to meet the educational needs of the school.
43. The process of self-evaluation is firmly based on first-hand evidence and is well . It is broadly accurate and has been influential in improving and planning standards.
44. Day-to-day administration is friendly and efficient. As part of the workforce remodelling initiative a review of the school management structures has been carried out successfully to enable those with posts of additional responsibilities to plan for improvement.
45. Arrangements to provide teachers with time during the taught week to plan, prepare and assess are well managed and are having a positive impact on the process of raising standards.
46. The school is well staffed with sufficient experienced and qualified teachers and support staff. Resources are of a good quality and quantity, although the school library resources are under-used. The school's building and grounds are well maintained and day-to-day administration is smooth and efficient. Internal and external displays of pupils' work reflect the high value the school places on pupils' achievement.
47. Bearing in mind the overall quality of education provided and the progress pupils make, the school gives good value for money.

## Recommendations

48. In order to improve the school in the areas inspected the staff and governors need to:
  - R1 raise standards in extended writing in English in KS1 and in the key skills where there are shortcomings; \*
  - R2 make the very good teaching in the school more consistent across the classes, and \*
  - R3 indicate more clearly in the school's subject policies how the curriculum is to be taught and in the school's schemes of work in subjects the standards expected of pupils year on year.

*\* Which the school has identified as a priority.*

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

49. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
50. In the 2009 national teacher assessments for seven year olds, starting often from a lower than average base, the proportion of pupils attaining at least the expected level (Level 2) in English, was below the LA and national averages. In mathematics and science results were above these averages. Combined results were very close to the LA average and just below the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) was very high in English and well above in mathematics and science. In these assessments boys generally out-performed girls, which is out of keeping with the general pattern, where since 2005 girls have largely out-performed boys.
51. In the 2009 national teacher assessments for eleven year olds, the proportion of pupils attaining at least the expected level (Level 4) in English, mathematics and science was below the LA and national averages. The combined results were below as was the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 5) in each of these three subjects. In these assessments boys were out-performed by girls as has been the case over recent years.
52. When the results in KS1 are compared to those of schools considered to have a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals (24%-32%), the results in English, mathematics and science were above those of these similar schools. The KS2 results were well below. Since 2005 KS1 results have been generally above the LA and national averages. In contrast the KS2 results have been below. The overall trend of improvement is positive. When these results are compared to the family of schools across Wales to which this school is considered to belong, results at KS2 were below those of most of these schools.
53. This information should be treated with caution because the school admits into KS2 a significant number of pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. Data suggest that they, as other pupils, often make good and very good progress and exceed the targets set for them. When the results of these pupils are discounted, in 2009 results were just above the LA and just below in all subjects. The school met its targets in English and exceeded its targets agreed with the LA in mathematics and science.
54. The overall quality of provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Foundation Phase Outcomes.
55. Standards of achievement in the lessons and subjects were as follows: -

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
24%	64%	12%	0%	0%

56. These figures are above those reported in HMCI's Annual Report 2007/2008 (Primary) where standards were good or better in 84%, with 12% being Grade 1 (outstanding). These figures are significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection when 2% were Grade 1, 68% Grade 2 and 30% Grade 3.

### Subject grades for subjects inspected

	<b>Nursery</b>	<b>Reception</b>	<b>KS1</b>	<b>KS2</b>
Foundation Phase	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
English	N/A	N/A	2	2
Welsh 2 <sup>nd</sup> Language	N/A	N/A	2	2
Mathematics	N/A	N/A	2	2
Science	N/A	N/A	2	2
History	N/A	N/A	2	2

57. In the key skill of communication in English achievement is good. Across the school nearly all pupils express themselves confidently. In the Foundation Phase all children listen well and speak clearly. In Y1 nearly all pupils are able to justify their opinions very ably. For example, nearly all pupils in Y5 and Y6 form opinions about the workhouse in Victorian times and express these confidently and clearly.
58. In the Foundation Phase, KS1 and KS2 nearly all pupils' reading skills are well developed and most are confident, accurate readers. The most able pupils read with measured expression and good levels of fluency and comprehension. Across the school pupils write for a variety of purposes such as in the Foundation Phase party invitations and letters. Within KS1 pupils' writing in subjects is weak.
59. Standards in communication in Welsh are good with no important shortcomings. All children in the Foundation Phase and KS1 speak and listen attentively to Welsh. Nearly all are beginning to use Welsh confidently during their lessons, for example to name parts of the body and to count. Older pupils respond appropriately to instructions for mental mathematics activities in Welsh. However, the standards of speaking in Welsh have some shortcomings because the majority of pupils does not respond in extended forms and has limited opportunities in their lessons to build up their responses in order to achieve higher standards. Pupils' bilingual skills follow a similar pattern.
60. Pupils' skills in using their mathematical knowledge are good with no important shortcomings overall. In the Foundation Phase many children make good progress in learning how to compare, weigh and measure in their play. Their problem-solving and investigative skills are very good. Nearly all pupils lack the ability to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects confidently.
61. Across the school skills in the use of ICT are good. In the Foundation Phase and KS1 pupils use simple programs effectively. In KS1 and KS2 pupils make good use of their ICT skills in a variety of ways. For example in KS2 pupils use a range of programmes in order to design an outdoor classroom. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of search engines and most older pupils search the Internet with understanding. Older pupils in KS2 have created their own electronic presentations, for example in science.
62. From the Foundation Phase pupils' understanding of the richness of their Welsh culture and heritage is good with no important shortcomings. In the Foundation Phase and KS1, most build up a good picture of the history and geography of their local area. Across the school pupils have a good understanding of their Welsh identity and traditions of Wales through activities including eisteddfod, celebrations and visits to the local area.

63. Problem solving skills are very good in the Foundation Phase and in KS1 where nearly all respond to problems and investigative activities very confidently. Their thinking skills are developing very well. Most children in the Foundation Phase were able to suggest how the postman could get around more quickly. Within KS2, nearly all solve problems and understand investigations in a range of subjects, such as an investigation into Egypt.
64. In the Foundation Phase and KS1 pupils creative skills are good with no important shortcomings. All use their imaginations well and regularly explore the environment when painting and sketching or performing on stage.
65. A particular strength of the school is the way in which all pupils work well together. This is good with outstanding features. They collaborate very well in groups and pairs and work together with an agreed sense of purpose. They share opinions and ideas willingly.
66. From the Foundation Phase nearly all show a good understanding of what they need to do to improve and discuss confidently and sensitively with each other, how their own homework and that of other pupils could be improved.
67. Pupils' personal, social and learning skills are good. Pupils show respect for others and concern for one another. They are polite and welcoming to visitors and behave appropriately. Pupils show a positive attitude to learning and are attentive in lessons. They are keen to participate in activities prepared for them and are proud of their achievements.
68. Pupils are courteous to visitors and readily engage in friendly conversation. They show a good understanding of what is expected from them in terms of being self-disciplined, openly showing good manners and common courtesies to others. Nearly all pupils are considerate and caring of one another which contribute significantly to the quality of life at the school.
69. Attendance levels for the academic year 2008/2009 were 90% which was below the target for the year of 93% and below the attendance percentages for previous years. In the last inspection it was 92%. The figure for 2008/2009 is below the average for primary schools in Wales and locally.
70. Pupils are developing skills to work independently and to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils work confidently as individuals and together in pairs and groups and are successfully encouraged to make their own decisions. They are keen to explore new learning situations. This is an outstanding feature in the Foundation Phase.
71. Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal, social, moral and cultural development. There is a strong pastoral ethos throughout the school and there is mutual respect between the staff and pupils. Staff value pupils' views, which allows the pupils to feel confident in expressing themselves to staff.
72. Pupils' awareness of sustainable development is very good and those who are members of the school's eco-committee are actively linked with a Ghanaian charity. This contact considerably enhances learners understanding of both global citizenship and the role of worldwide charities in helping others.

## The quality of education and training

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

#### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

73. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report.

74. The quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
25%	61%	14%	0%	0%

75. The quality of teaching is good or better, that is Grade 1 or Grade 2 in 86% of lessons. This figure is close to the national picture reported by HMCI in the Annual Report 2007/2008 (Primary) where the quality of teaching was good or better, that is Grade 1 or Grade 2 in 83% of lessons. In this inspection 14% of lessons were Grade 3 compared to the national picture where 17% of lessons were Grade 3 or below. These figures are well above those of the last inspection when 63% were Grade 2 or better with only 3% being Grade 1.

76. Across the school, from the Foundation Phase and including the resource base for those with moderate learning difficulties, nearly all teachers plan very carefully and systematically. In the Foundation Phase practitioners show considerable imagination in arranging many stimulating and enjoyable learning experiences. Planning for those who have some degree of SEN including those in the resource base is thorough and effective. Nearly all KS1 and KS2 planning documents indicate clearly what pupils should learn in the time available and the necessary steps they should make in order to reach the objectives set for them.

77. The best lessons, which have many outstanding features, are found across the school, but most of all in classes for older pupils. In these lessons the teachers pose very clear and challenging questions and the pupils are given very well-judged encouragement to make detailed responses. Teachers catch the pupils' attention and interest by the very expressive way a topic is introduced. They use extremely well-made and innovative resources to give their lesson a strong sense of realism for example when looking at an 'alien egg'.

78. Teachers make very good use of praise and recognise individual efforts very warmly. They emphasise the need to be kind and gentle by the very good examples they themselves set. The teachers organise for and ensure that their learning support assistants (LSAs) are very purposefully and very effectively engaged in giving individual help which is well judged to address specific learning needs. They ensure that all are aware of what is expected of them and are successfully encouraged to work with a real sense of pace and purpose. As a result all pupils try hard to please their teachers and to help to contribute to the happy atmosphere in their classes.

79. Where there are outstanding features, teachers have very good subject knowledge. For example when investigating viscosity and when discussing with older pupils the working life of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Very effective links are made with other subjects, for example between history and English when developing pupils' vocabulary. The high pace to learning and the positive sense of purpose are maintained throughout because the teachers have high expectations of what their pupils should achieve. Pupils are regularly reminded of those.

80. Teachers at the end of the lessons thoroughly review what has been learnt. As a result pupils know very clearly what they need to do in order to make good progress. Teachers in their lessons take up many opportunities very well to promote pupils' use of incidental Welsh throughout their lessons and for pupils to use Welsh in their responses regularly.
81. Where teaching has some shortcomings, lesson plans are unclear and teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient guidance of what is expected of them. The tasks set lack appropriate challenge for nearly all of the pupils who find them very easy. As a result pupils quickly lose interest and their attention wanders because the lessons are too long and as a result the pupils are bored. The teachers did not ensure that those who were in difficulty were quickly identified and supported effectively.
82. Arrangements for assessment meet statutory requirements. Formal and informal assessments are well used throughout the school. Useful informal evaluations at the end of the completion of each week's work are kept.
83. The school pupil tracking system of assessment, beginning with an appropriate baseline is comprehensive and rigorous. The data are carefully analysed and, in the main, effectively used to shape learning in line with the needs of the individual pupils.
84. At KS2 targets and evidence of achievement in English, mathematics and science are rigorously recorded enabling teachers to evaluate progress and set fresh targets when appropriate.
85. The methods of day-to-day recording of individual pupils' progress have shortcomings. Judgements are not always made on pupils' progress and achievements accurately.
86. In KS1, a comprehensive assessment and recording system is in place, which gives information for future planning and for reporting to parents. Daily informal 'post it' records are kept in order to record a skill achieved by a pupil from any of the areas of learning covered. Learning support assistants play an effective role in this process.
87. Collections of pupils' work are in place in many subjects. However, they do not clearly indicate the standards pupils should aim to achieve year on year. The school is working closely with other nearby schools including the local secondary school to agree standards particularly in English, mathematics and science.
88. Assessment for learning strategies form an integral part of many lessons and is well used as a basis for encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning particularly in upper KS2.
89. A detailed marking policy is in place but its implementation is inconsistent across the key stages. Pupils' work is marked regularly and in the best practice comments are given that provide further direction for improvement. Targets are set by staff with individual pupils at the beginning of each term and reviewed at the end of each term in order to encourage the pupils to be more involved in their own learning.
90. Annual reports to parents are of a good quality and conform to statutory requirements. They provide useful information for parents on the progress made by their children and give targets for improvement. Parents also benefit from formal and informal opportunities to discuss their children's work with members of staff.

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

**Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

91. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
92. Overall the school provides well for the needs and interests of all learners including those of the more able and talented pupils and those who have some degree of SEN including those in the resource base in KS2.
93. The curriculum is balanced broad and relevant and is equally accessible to all learners.
94. There is very good provision for the Foundation Phase both inside and out. The provision is also good at KS1 and KS2 where the school has planned a skills-based approach to curricular planning.
95. While the school is making good progress towards implementing Curriculum 2008 these have yet to make it sufficiently clear in the subject policies how subjects are to be taught. However, a good feature is the provision made to broaden learners' experiences. This makes a significant contribution to the development of their learning and social skills. Pupils' experiences are significantly enriched through a wide varied programme of educational visits including outdoor residential experiences for older pupils.
96. These out-of-school visits have made a good contribution to pupils' understanding of local history and to their awareness of 'Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig.'
97. Although first-hand opportunities to interact with people from different races and cultures are limited, the school takes effective steps to ensure that pupils' understanding of other cultures is developed well through subjects including geography, history, art, and religious education. All Y6 pupils have opportunities to learn some French through the effective transition arrangements with the local secondary school.
98. There is a good range of after-schools sports including football, rugby and more unusually fishing, skiing and cycling. Learners' physical well-being is also successfully promoted through the Healthy Schools' Initiative which includes the healthy-food tuck shop run by learners.
99. Provision for pupils' personal development including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of exceptional quality throughout the school.
100. The acts of worship, which are broadly of a Christian nature, promote clear values with time allocated for learners to reflect on their own beliefs. These acts are very well organised and structured and meet legal requirements. Themes are prepared well in advance and communicated to parents.
101. Good features outweigh shortcomings in the arrangements to promote bilingual skills. Planning for bilingualism is more evident at the Foundation Phase and KS1. However, in many classes especially with older pupils, bilingual skills are promoted and learners acquire a useful vocabulary but there are inconsistencies in planning between different year groups in KS2.

102. The school is proactive in combating social disadvantage and stereotyping. It ensures equality of access and opportunity across the full range of its provision. The school's provision reflects well national priorities to promote lifelong learning skills. The school is providing its pupils with an exceptional foundation for this. This process is fostered by the very good links with the main receiving secondary school.
103. The curriculum is supported by a wide range of extra-curricular and out-of-school activities including music lessons, science club and language lessons. The school has fostered links with outside agencies, such as Cardiff City Football Club, Cardiff Blues Rugby, an Olympic runner and a gold medallist in the Paralympics, to promote sport and encourage pupils to follow a healthy lifestyle. The curriculum is further enriched by organised visits to the theatre, and educational trips locally and abroad. Pupils in Y6 pupils are offered the opportunity of attending a residential course at Dolygaer Outdoor Education Centre.
104. The school's partnership with the local community is outstanding, including its links with Merthyr Angling, local businesses, the church and the Reverend, local rugby club, Cefn Coed Community Centre, the community police and individuals in the community. The school and its various activities are very well supported and is a valued focal point in the community.
105. The school is committed to encouraging parental involvement in the education of pupils and there is strong emphasis on this partnership. There are numerous opportunities for parents to become involved including the parents' association.
106. The school is continuing to develop its provision for work-related education. The school has developed good working relationships with many local businesses and other relevant agencies, including the Rathbone Training Agency, the British Council and Sazania Association. The school's link with the Environment Agency is continuing to develop through participation in the next phase of the 'Salmon Homecoming Project'.
107. The school's policies and procedures to promote equal opportunities and to tackle social disadvantage and stereotyping are very good. Pupils make progress regardless of their ability, gender, race or backgrounds. The school works in partnership with a range of external agencies to ensure the best possible support for pupils and their families.
108. Provision for and understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship is outstanding. The school very actively promotes efforts to act in a sustainable way by minimising waste and reducing energy consumption.
109. Pupils thoroughly understand the need to care for the environment. As well as holding an annual Environmental Week, the school has an active Eco-Committee. The pupils are actively involved in a range of recycling schemes and understand they must try and conserve energy and consumption.
110. Pupils' entrepreneurial skills are good. Year 4 and Y5 pupils have been involved in making bookmarks to sell as a fund-raising venture, involving pupils making, marketing and selling goods.

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

##### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

111. The findings of the inspection team did not match the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report. This is because while the school provides very good support for those with additional learning needs, overall there were insufficient outstanding features to justify the highest grade.
112. The school has successfully created through careful planning and arrangements, an environment which supports pupils and makes them feel secure. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils feel confident in, and are encouraged to talk to staff about their viewpoints knowing that their views are listened to and valued. This contributes to the pupils' self-worth and personal development. Pupils readily turn to staff for help and support and they are listened to and treated with respect.
113. The school successfully works in partnership with a wide range of specialist agencies including the education welfare officer (EWO) and the behavioural support teacher to ensure pupils' needs are carefully assessed and helped appropriately.
114. The school enjoys a close working partnership with parents and carers which contribute to the pastoral ethos offered to pupils. The school is very good at regularly consulting parents and carers for their views, and the parents report that the school is good at taking parents' views into account.
115. The school council and eco-committee give pupil members a good opportunity to work together and a voice in decision-making. The members are very proud of their election and take their duties very seriously. They are aware that their suggestions have secured improvements to pupils' day-to-day experience at school, and are eager to explore new initiatives to implement at the school in future.
116. There are very good induction and transitional arrangements in place helping children settle in quickly and happily in their new learning environment. Children in reception class are happy, confident and settled. Arrangements for pupils moving classes and transferring to secondary education are structured and effective.
117. Attendance and punctuality are very carefully monitored by the school secretary, the headteacher and EWO. Good use is now made of attendance data and follow-up procedures including 'first day response' which the school has recently introduced.
118. The school has clear, documented policies and procedures assuring the health, safety and well-being of pupils, and clear procedures are in place to deal with any accidents and emergencies. Arrangements for child protection are in line with local guidelines and recommended good practice.
119. The school is successful at promoting healthy eating and leading a healthy lifestyle. All pupils readily engage in recent healthy-eating initiatives and through the school council have requested and obtained specified healthy foods to consume at school.

120. The management and monitoring of pupils' behaviour are outstanding. The enforcement of positive recognition of good behaviour is pivotal and the mutual respect between pupils and teachers and one another is very strong.
121. The quality of provision for additional learning needs is good with outstanding features. Procedures for the early identification of particular needs, including the baseline scores and a range of assessment data, are effective. There is a detailed policy for SEN and the provision is managed well by the headteacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo). A register of SEN is carefully maintained. This is regularly reviewed through a detailed tracking system in order that all pupils move from school action plus to school action or are taken off the register on a regular basis. Pupils on the register have very good precise and detailed individual education plans (IEPs), which have been devised by the school. The pupils are heavily involved in the writing of their own IEP. This is a good and effective feature of the school. These plans are reviewed each term and parents are regularly consulted.
122. The quality of the provision for the pupils in the KS2 resource base is outstanding. Pupils within this base benefit from exceptionally well-structured teaching and sensitive responses to pupils' wide ranging needs. This has led to a high level of self-esteem among the pupils. The teaching assistant within the unit works very closely with the teacher and both make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
123. The pupils from the base integrate very successfully with pupils in the main school for music and physical education. Two children have recently returned permanently to the main school. All pupils with SEN on the register are included successfully in the life and work of the school and have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum.
124. Pupils who have targeted support in literacy make good progress because they receive well-structured support from the language support teacher and from the 'Catch-Up' programme, through regular withdrawal sessions.
125. The school's provision for equal opportunities is good and the school is committed to ensuring that all pupils are treated the same.
126. The school has effective policies and procedures to promote good race relations and diversity is recognised and respected throughout the school. Equality is embedded in the school and pupils value and respect the contribution of others, regardless of their ability, gender or race. The school has outstanding measures in place to eliminate oppressive behaviour, including racial discrimination, bullying and all forms of harassment. Measures including an anti-bullying policy, anti-bullying week, a complaints policy, peer mediation and bully boxes placed in the infants and junior department are proving very effective. The school functions well as an inclusive, happy and supportive community where all pupils are valued equally.
127. There are no current pupils or staff at the school with disabilities. The school has made all reasonable arrangements to secure equal treatment of disabled pupils and to welcome disabled visitors to the school. The school has a Disability Equality Policy and has drawn up a Draft Disability Access Plan stating how the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 are to be met. This is as a result of a detailed survey of the site.

## Leadership and management

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

#### Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

128. The findings of the inspection team did not match the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report. This is because the school under-estimated by one grade the very clear sense of direction given to the school and the very strong commitment from the headteacher to promote very high expectations for all pupils and adults in the school. This judgement does not match those made for Key Question 1 and Key Question 7. This is because of the overall positive impact the headteacher has on the way the school as a whole functions.
129. The school is very well led by an experienced and very capable headteacher who over considerable time has very successfully developed a positive ethos which informs the work of all staff and pupils and is outstanding. The school's mission statement is consistently reflected in the daily life of the school where there is a very noticeable commitment emanating from the headteacher to create a school where love and concern, eager activity and a sense of beauty prevail. This positive ethos permeates the whole of the school's life and contributes significantly to its overall success. The school consciously looks outwards to work closely and constructively with a number of schools both in Wales and abroad; this is largely as a result of the headteacher's outstanding initiative and drive to ensure that all pupils receive the best opportunities to reach their individual potential and all experience education of a high quality.
130. The Foundation Phase is very well managed and the headteacher and senior management team work hard to carry out their individual responsibilities. Across the school both teaching and non-teaching staff show a strong sense of community and mutual support for each other. The senior management team works together successfully to ensure that all pupils have the best opportunities they can provide and have equal access to all that goes on in the school. This is reflected as a particular strength in the way in which the resource base for KS2 pupils is currently led and managed. Curriculum leaders have carried out detailed reviews of their subject responsibilities and have effectively identified what steps need to be taken next in order to raise standards further.
131. Extensive arrangements are in place to assess pupils' longer-term achievements and to identify whether or not pupils are making the progress it would be reasonable to expect of them. These are very well used to indicate where additional support is needed and it is provided.
132. The school takes careful note of national priorities and local initiatives. Arrangements for the introduction of the Foundation Phase have been extremely well organised so that all of those children have very good access to a very wide range of learning experiences, both inside and out. All adults involved have a very thorough understanding of how to plan and organise to teach these children. All children in the Foundation Phase and KS1 are making good progress in developing their bilingual skills as a result of the purposeful way in which this initiative has been managed in these areas. In KS2 this has been less successful. There is a well supported breakfast club.

133. The headteacher carefully evaluates the success of teaching and learning at first hand and has high expectations of all staff. There are rigorous arrangements to promote the professional development of all staff and to assess the impact of initiatives the school is pursuing. This is closely related to the school's performance management arrangements in order to address the individual needs of staff. There are appropriate arrangements in place to support newly qualified teachers and teachers who are new to the school.
134. The governing body is well led by a very experienced and committed chair of governors who has a clear understanding of the school's needs and its future development. The governing body meets all of its statutory duties. There is a close and effective working relationship between the governing body and the headteacher reflecting the mutual trust and support which exist across the school. Governors are well informed and pro active. They rigorously monitor the quality of provision and evaluate the success of spending decisions. They are fully involved in the life of the school and carefully review the progress which the school is making.
135. Financial management is well organised and spending decisions are carefully made so that the school's finances are focused correctly on the educational needs of the school. The school's budget is closely linked to the school's financial management priorities and to those set out in the school development plan (SDP).

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

**Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

136. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
137. The school's self-evaluation report is carefully linked to the SDP. It is based on a comprehensive school audit including discussions with subject leaders, direct evidence from lesson observations, assessment data and detailed assessments of pupils' work. The views of all of those within the school community have been carefully gathered and their views considered. The self-evaluation process is well used by the school to drive up standards. The self-evaluation report also provides clear indications of the additional steps needed to improve further the school's provision. The self-evaluation report has been discussed in detail with the governing body and other stakeholders.
138. The inspection team agreed with the school's judgements on five of the seven key questions. In Key Question 4 the inspectors' findings graded it as overall Grade 2, one below the grade awarded in the self-evaluation report. In Key Question 5 the inspectors graded the provision one grade above that allocated by the self-evaluation report due to the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher over a considerable period.
139. The school has responded well to the key issues identified in the previous report. Good progress has been made. Statutory requirements are now fully met and information provided to parents through the school brochure and governors' annual report is extremely comprehensive. Pupils now have good

opportunities to work together on problem solving and develop their ability to become independent learners.

140. The provision for ensuring the progress of all pupils including the most and least able is now good. The well-designed pupil friendly IEPs and their use to assist progress are excellent. They ensure that all concerned including pupils, parents and staff are fully aware of the steps required to improve performance.
141. The quality of teaching and planning is much better than it was then. There is now very good provision of learning support for children in the Foundation Phase.
142. The SDP now successfully prioritises the steps to plan improvement. There has been a restructuring of the leadership team and subject leaders. The school had updated policies and schemes of work for all subject areas prior to the introduction of Curriculum 2008. These documents are currently being reviewed once more.

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

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

143. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgement made by the school in the self-evaluation report.
144. The school has a good provision of teaching staff to support the number of pupils on roll. Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced and have detailed job descriptions. All work well as a team and willingly and openly share their professional experiences.
145. Good use is made of LSAs who have clear roles and plan, record and work alongside teaching staff. They make a significant contribution to classroom activities in the Foundation Phase and KS1. The contribution of the LSAs is particularly effective.
146. The administrative assistant, midday supervisors, canteen and cleaning staff all perform their duties effectively and efficiently. All are proud of their school. The caretaker makes a particularly valuable contribution to the maintenance of the building and equipment. The building is in good order and kept very clean.
147. The school has a good range of appropriate resources that match the requirements of the curriculum and are accessible to all pupils. Resources are constantly used to enrich the curriculum. Resources for pupils with SEN are appropriate for their needs.
148. There is an adequate amount of reference books and the school also has a varied stock of group and individual reading books. Many classrooms have inviting book corners to encourage reading. However, the main library is under-used by pupils in order to retrieve information for themselves.
149. The internal accommodation provides an appropriate setting for teaching and learning and is a stimulating environment for all pupils. Attractive displays throughout the school show a wide range of pupils' work to good effect. These displays enhance the learning environment and have a positive impact on the learning ethos. The outdoors resources are very well used. Learning resources

are well looked after, readily accessible to all pupils and meet the demands of their learning experiences.

150. The school has effective procedures in place for promoting staff development. Teacher's individual needs are addressed through performance management and the needs of the school are determined by the priorities in the SDP. The school has a coherent approach to developing both the personal needs of the staff and to providing training that is directly linked to the targets of the school in the SDP.
151. The opportunity for workforce remodelling has been used very effectively to create appropriate opportunities for subject leaders and management staff to carry out their extra responsibilities and to appoint extra teachers to enable this to happen. Arrangements to provide time during the taught week for teachers to plan, prepare and assess are well established and well organised. They are contributing positively in helping to raise standards and the time is well used.
152. Economic, efficient and effective use is made of all available resources. Initiatives are carefully costed and developments are prioritised in line with the SDP. Expenditure is regularly reviewed in order to ensure that money is being well spent.
153. Bearing in mind the good quality of education provided and the progress pupils make, often from low starting points, the school provides good value for money.

## **Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning**

### **Foundation phase for under 5s**

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

##### **Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural development**

#### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

##### **Good and outstanding features**

154. In the reception, all children are confident when working and investigating. Nearly all speak very confidently to adults and to each other. All show considerable enthusiasm and try hard, remaining on task for long periods. They identify with the situations of others, for example when working with 'aliens'.
155. All children are curious and show care and concern for each other. They play in the space station as astronauts and mission controllers and show a strong sense of identification with the adventure they are undertaking. They are independent and nearly all dress and undress confidently for physical activities when using the outdoor classroom in the rain. They understand the need for hygiene and to be healthy.
156. Nearly all discuss their work thoughtfully and recognise what they do well and where they could improve it. They follow rules of an activity accurately, for example when going on a word search and when searching for an 'alien egg'. They all understand that there are rules of behaviour which they try hard to follow. They know what is right and wrong and what is fair and unfair.
157. By the end of the reception, nearly all have a very clear understanding that there are special times during the day for them to think about important events which

shape their lives. They have a very good understanding of the changing world around them and of the dangers which they might meet.

### **Language, literacy and communication skills**

#### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

##### **Good and outstanding features**

158. All children in the reception listen very carefully and talk enthusiastically. They ask a wide range of questions and are very curious. They talk very excitedly when they find out something for themselves, for example what is inside an 'alien egg'. They use language very well, bearing in mind their starting points.
159. Across the reception, nearly all children discuss with practitioners and use a developing vocabulary, for example when talking about the different types and species of birds which visit their part of the school. They speak sensibly about their activities and make lengthy explanations. They share their favourite stories with all practitioners and confidently speak aloud to the rest of their group. From the early part of their stay in reception, all children make a very confident start to their reading. They follow text from left to right. They know that a book has a front and a back and enjoy sharing their stories with adults. By the end of the reception, nearly all recognise the sounds letters make and build these sounds to read unfamiliar, simple words.
160. All children in the reception are beginning to form letters in the correct way using a good range of materials to make these shapes. By the end of the reception they write simple instructions.

### **Welsh language development**

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

##### **Good features**

161. In the reception class, nearly all children are beginning to use simple words and to follow instructions in Welsh. They listen and respond appropriately. They have a growing Welsh vocabulary and an awareness of their Welsh heritage and some Welsh stories. They are beginning to count in Welsh.

##### **Shortcomings**

162. There are no important shortcomings.

### **Mathematical development**

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

##### **Good features**

163. In the reception, children make good progress in using mathematics in their daily activities. They have good counting skills when using money in the shop and taking cash from their own cash machine. They develop their counting skills well and use number words accurately in their play. They draw pictograms confidently to illustrate for example, the number of different bears they found in the sand.
164. They use a balance accurately to distinguish between objects which are heavier and lighter. They measure quantities carefully when making porridge for the 'Three Bears'. They know how to order objects by their length. They recognise the different times of the day and when it is 'nearly time to go home'. They know

the names of the days of the week in the correct order and how the seasons change from one to another.

### **Shortcomings**

165. There are no important shortcomings.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

#### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

##### **Good and outstanding features**

166. In the reception, all children have a very good understanding of the natural world around them. They plant bulbs for the spring and collect leaves and seeds in the autumn. They accurately identify and name the birds which visit their garden. They know about the wide variety of living things which surround them.

167. Across the reception, they describe the weather accurately and understand that they should look after the natural world carefully. They are very familiar with the world outdoors and prepare sandwiches for a picnic and cook potatoes on an open fire on Bonfire Night and they enjoy making cawl from the vegetables they grow in their gardens.

168. Nearly all children in the reception have a very good understanding of the jobs which people have in their area and of the make-up of the village including the shops in the main street. They recognise confidently the work of those who help them such as doctors, nurses, firemen and the police. They have a growing sense of their Welsh identity and the significance of the local landscape and buildings nearby such as the viaduct.

169. By the end of the reception, in religious education, children begin to realise that people have different beliefs and practices that reflect their values and behaviour. They learn about some of these through stories and role-play.

170. Nearly all children have a very good understanding of how they have changed since they were small. They look at photographs of Cefn Coed taken a long time ago and recognise how their village has changed. All use simple programs on the computer such as 'The Big Red Bus' confidently.

### **Physical development**

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

##### **Good features**

171. All have good coordination when riding their large wheeled toys. They appreciate the need to take part sensibly and to avoid accidents. They move with confidence and control using large and smaller apparatus sensibly.

172. Across the reception all know the importance of 'warming up' and 'cooling down' before and after exercise and of the positive effect of vigorous exercise on their bodies. They show good balance and an increasing awareness of how to use space well when responding in dance to a request to travel with their 'alien' visitors to their planet. They enjoy performing different types of movements formally and informally in their expressive and creative activities.

### **Shortcomings**

173. There are no important shortcomings.

## **Creative development**

### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

#### **Good and outstanding features**

174. All children in the reception make very good progress in using a wide range of materials and media to produce different effects. For example they use fabric, pens, paints and colour blocks to decorate 'underpants stolen by the aliens'. They make colourful attempts to decorate cakes very well which will go to Goldilocks' birthday tea. They complete individual birthday cards to send to her.
175. A particular strength is in the way in which all children take on roles very readily in their independent play. They take part in a wide-range of situations, for example when dressing as astronauts and aliens in their space stations. They play together confidently when working in the 'Three Bears Kitchen'. All are very enthusiastic makers of music, experimenting with the sounds and rhythms thoughtfully. They sing tunefully a wide range of songs including some in Welsh.

## **English**

### **Key stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

### **Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

176. In both key stages, including those in the resource base, pupils develop good listening skills. In KS1, most pupils listen well and respond enthusiastically to stories and new knowledge. Most pupils succeed in describing and explaining effectively. They take on different roles and express opinions well, for example when discussing Victorian toys and games.
177. Nearly all pupils across KS1 listen well to instructions and carry out their work effectively. In most KS2 classes they listen effectively with increased and sustained concentration in both class and collaborative group work.
178. In KS2, most pupils confidently contribute to discussions expressing their thoughts, feelings and opinions with maturing clarity. Nearly all older pupils in KS2 in their discussions in groups and to the class showed a mature understanding of how to discuss sensitively difficult issues such as how to help people less fortunate than themselves.
179. Many pupils in KS1 make good progress in reading. Many pupils know the sounds of the alphabet and use this skill to decode unknown words when reading. They can discuss characters from stories, read and name the title and author of the book and make predictions. In KS2, many pupils continue to make good progress in reading. They read confidently from the school's structured reading scheme and also from a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts.
180. Pupils in KS1 write for a variety of purposes in line with the class topic. Many younger pupils in KS1 recognise the phonetic nature of writing and discriminate between letters. Many pupils write simple sentences. Nearly all spell three-letter words correctly.
181. Nearly all pupils in KS2 write neatly. Pupils make good progress with their writing throughout KS2 and use a range of different styles for different purposes and audiences.

182. By the end of KS2, many pupils become confident and mature writers. They have good understanding of grammatical conventions and sentence structures and their spelling is usually accurate.

### **Shortcomings**

183. While there are no important shortcomings, in KS1, pupils' writing is often too brief.

## **Welsh second language**

**Key stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

### **Good features**

184. Many of the KS1 pupils recall names of some of the main parts of the body and many can express their feelings well using such phrases such as 'Rwy'n hapus/wedi blino/ofnadwy'. They describe 'Y Tywydd' when using flash cards as support.

185. Nearly all Y2 pupils know the names of everyday clothing such as 'crys, trowsus, sgerf' and are familiar with the names of common pets. They accurately read labelling in displays and bilingual signs in corridors and on classroom walls. They enjoy singing Welsh action songs such as 'Pwy wnaeth y ser uwchben' with appropriate actions.

186. In KS2, nearly all pupils listen well to each other and respond very well to role-playing situations. Pronunciation and intonation are good.

187. Many pupils in Y3 and Y4 know how to express 'likes' 'Dw i'n hoffi'.

188. Many Y5 pupils hold an extended conversation in which they can relate personal information about their locality 'Rwy'n byw ym Merthyr' and express personal preferences and relate details of their siblings, for example 'Mae brawd/chwaer gen i'. Older pupils know how to use the past tense and positional language, 'Es i, Ble es ti?' and of 'Sut es ti' accurately. Learners have good knowledge of the Welsh names of some European countries which they find useful in their study of the topic 'Holidays' - 'Gwyliau'.

### **Shortcomings**

189. There are no important shortcomings.

## **Mathematics**

**Key stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

### **Good features**

190. Nearly all pupils in KS1 count confidently within 100. In Y1, all use money accurately when carrying out simple buying and selling activities using 1p, 2p, 5p and 10p coins and giving change appropriately. They order number correctly and recognise when a number is misplaced in a series of numbers. They identify patterns with shapes and solve practical problems such as planning a route using agreed criteria. They draw accurately pictograms to express relationships between different pieces of information they collect.

191. In Y2, nearly all express number in array and recognise place value. They quickly and accurately count different numbers to make the same total. They calculate answers in money transactions using appropriate symbols. They recognise similarities and differences in shape. They are aware of and draw two-dimensional shapes and sort information using pictograms and bar charts.
192. In KS2, nearly all pupils build on their understanding of number successfully. Younger pupils know how to find the difference between numbers within 100. They halve and double numbers quickly and accurately. Nearly all know that division is the reverse of multiplication. They carry out mental calculations quickly and accurately. Nearly all younger pupils in KS2 measure accurately using a ruler correctly. They use grams and kilograms appropriately when weighing. They tell the time to one-minute intervals. They recognise the difference between polygons and non-polygons. They approximate accurately.
193. Nearly all older pupils in KS2 round up quickly and accurately when using larger numbers. They calculate answers to simple fraction problems. They draw detailed bar charts, line graphs and frequency tables to illustrate their findings, for example when looking at each others' spelling test results. They estimate sensibly, compare fractions, percentages and decimals. They recognise equivalency well. They know the properties of different triangles and how to measure and calculate angles in a triangle. Nearly all know how to investigate a simple mathematical problem and how to identify numerical patterns, for example when investigating the number nine.

### Shortcomings

194. There are no important shortcomings.

<b>Science</b>
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**Key stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

### Good features

195. The quality of pupils' investigative skill development in KS1 and most of KS2 is very good and they have a comprehensive understanding of health and safety issues relating to the use of equipment in investigations.
196. All KS1 pupils observe investigations closely and accurately when looking at how jelly dissolves. Many recognise that heat helps jelly to dissolve. They understand the concept of having a control element of cold water to make comparisons. Many pupils make sensible deductions on why stirring helps the process of dissolving.
197. Older KS1 pupils carry out investigations on the use of everyday materials and by discussing properties of materials, using scientific vocabulary, make sensible predications, for example, in discovering the best material to use as stuffing for a toy bear and sorting materials into different categories.
198. By the end of KS1, most pupils have a working knowledge of body parts, their senses, healthy foods, and properties of materials as a result of carrying out practical investigations.
199. Most pupils in KS2 carry out investigations in an orderly and methodical way. They understand the requirements of fair testing and identify variables. They

make sensible predications and the likely outcomes of investigations. They relate their observations to scientific ideas. They record their results in a variety of formats, such as charts, diagrams as well as written accounts and offer explanations of what they have discovered. Scientific vocabulary is used throughout. An example of this is in the investigations on viscosity and dissolving solids in water.

200. By the end of KS2, many pupils have a good awareness of health and safety issues and develop their knowledge and application of the scientific skills of planning, investigating hypotheses, recording and analysing results appropriately. Presentation of work is very good throughout the key stage.

### **Shortcomings**

201. There are no important shortcomings.

### **History**

**Key stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

202. In KS1, all pupils have a developing understanding of chronology placing toys of various eras accurately on a time line. They listen well to explanations and can identify various stages in the life of individuals such as Guy Fawkes.
203. In Y2, all pupils have thought about and recorded relevant questions to ask the keeper of toys at The Museum of Welsh Life. They are aware of how life in the past differed from the life they lead today
204. They play with toys that were popular in the Victorian era. They empathise with the Victorian children when they play.
205. They respond well to open questions about the hard lives of children in times past and develop good thinking skills. They also use ICT skills to record their findings.
206. They ask pertinent questions about the lives of children of their own age who lived in the Victorian era. Nearly all know about the work of pioneers such as Lord Shaftesbury and his role in decreasing the employment of child labour.
207. In Y3 and Y4, all compile a Victorian dictionary and extend their vocabulary. They appreciate how information is gathered about the past through archaeological discoveries. They are aware of the significant historical finds through digs made in their own area. They study the tribal structures of the Celts and most can describe how men in that era combined the roles of warriors and farmers. They work effectively in pairs and small groups to discuss details of the Celtic period and most learners know details of the shields, the bow handles and torque worn by the men in battle. They accurately describe the homes of the Celts, what they ate and how they cooked. They are able to give accurate details of, and draw realistic pictures of the warriors' battle dress.
208. All older pupils in KS2 explore issues such as the workhouse in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. They have clear and perceptive views about the hardship of the unemployed in such institutions.

209. They use historical documents such as the census well and deduce much from it about the family structures of the poor in that century and of the occupations of both men and women in south Wales. They know about the effects that the coming of the railways to the valleys had on people in the coal and iron industries and the hardship suffered. They understand about the poor sanitation and the adverse effect it had on life expectancy in their town.

210. They make good use of their local environment and of places of significant historical interest such as the nearby Cyfarthfa Castle and its links with the Crawshay family and the modest home of the eminent composer Dr Joseph Parry.

### **Shortcomings**

211. There are no important shortcomings.

## **School's response to the inspection**

The headteacher, staff and governors have carefully considered the findings of our recent inspection.

All concerned are pleased that the inspection team has recognised that Ysgol-y-Graig Primary School is a good school and has highlighted the current good practice and progress made since the last inspection.

The report notes the strengths and many outstanding features in the school. Particularly pleasing are comments relating to the outstanding behaviour of the pupils, that the school is a close knit, inclusive community where all pupils are valued, the outstanding partnership with parents, the local community and with other schools within the cluster and higher education institutions, the standards of achievement and the quality of teaching which are above the national average.

The school values the recognition given to the strong pastoral ethos throughout the school and the exceptional way the school promotes learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The inspection report warmly praises the leadership of the school creating a school where love and concern, eager activity and a sense of beauty prevail. Recognition is also welcome for the outstanding features found in the Foundation Phase, Resource Base and mainstream classes, together with the efficient and effective efforts of support staff, administrative assistant and caretaker.

The close and effective working relationship between the governing body and school reflecting mutual trust and support is comprehensively covered.

This inspection has done much for Ysgol-y-Graig Primary School. We would like to thank the inspection team for the thorough, courteous and purposeful way they carried out their work.

An action plan will be formulated in response to the inspection recommendations which will be sent to all parents. Progress made will be reported through the governors' annual report.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol-y-Graig Primary School
School type	Primary inc Foundation Phase
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Address of school	Brewery Lane Cefn Coed Merthyr Tydfil
Postcode	CF48 2LR
Telephone number	01685 723159
Headteacher	Mr Tom Williams
Date of appointment	1 <sup>st</sup> October 1995
Chair of governors	Mr L Davies
Registered inspector	Mr Peter Mathias
Dates of inspection	23 <sup>rd</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup> November 2009

## 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	N/A	32	17	26	15	30	24	22	166

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	8	1	8.4

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	26:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	N/A
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	5.5:1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	26
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection		
Term	R	Rest of school
Autumn 2008	91.9%	90.9%
Spring 2009	87%	88.6%
Summer 2009	92%	89.9%

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	28%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	1

## Appendix 3

This report uses data for 2009 for LEA and Wales comparative information

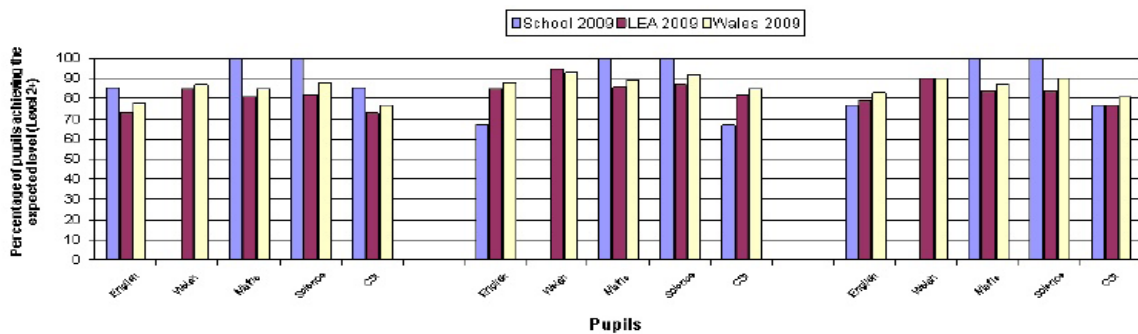
**YSGOL-Y-GRAIG**  
Merthyr Tydfil

LEA/School no: 675/2330

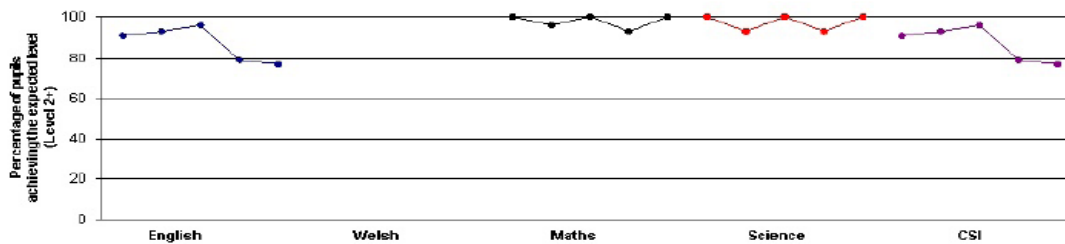
### School comparative information: National Curriculum Assessments 2009 with benchmarking Key Stage 1

Percentage of boys, girls, and pupils achieving at least the expected level (Level 2+):

	Boys			Girls			Pupils		
	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009
English	86	73	78	67	85	88	77	79	83
Welsh	.	85	87	.	95	93	.	90	90
Maths	100	81	85	100	86	89	100	84	87
Science	100	82	88	100	87	92	100	84	90
CSI	86	73	77	67	82	85	77	77	81



### School Performance over time (2005 - 2009)



### Contextual Information

Benchmarked against schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.  
School's results shown in greyed boxes. Column headings refer to...

- Quartile 1 School is in the top 25 per cent.  
Quartile 2 School is in the top 50 per cent but not the top 25 per cent.  
Quartile 3 School is in the bottom 50 per cent but not the bottom 25 per cent.  
Quartile 4 School is in the bottom 25 per cent.

Free School Meal Group  
**More than or equal to 24 per cent and up to 32 per cent eligible for FSM**

	Quartile 4	Lower Quartile Boundary	Quartile 3	Median Boundary	Quartile 2	Upper Quartile Boundary	Quartile 1
English		72	77	80		87	
Welsh		67		90		100	
Maths		78		86		92	100
Science		84		91		99	100
CSI		70	77	78		86	

#### Notes:

- Figures for Welsh refer to attainment in Welsh first language only.
- CSI = Core Subject Indicator. To achieve the CSI a pupil must achieve at least the expected level 2 in both Mathematics and Science and either English or Welsh first language.
- If there were no pupils eligible for assessment in a subject for a particular year the graph will discontinue and show a gap for that year.

This report uses data for 2009 for LEA and Wales comparative information

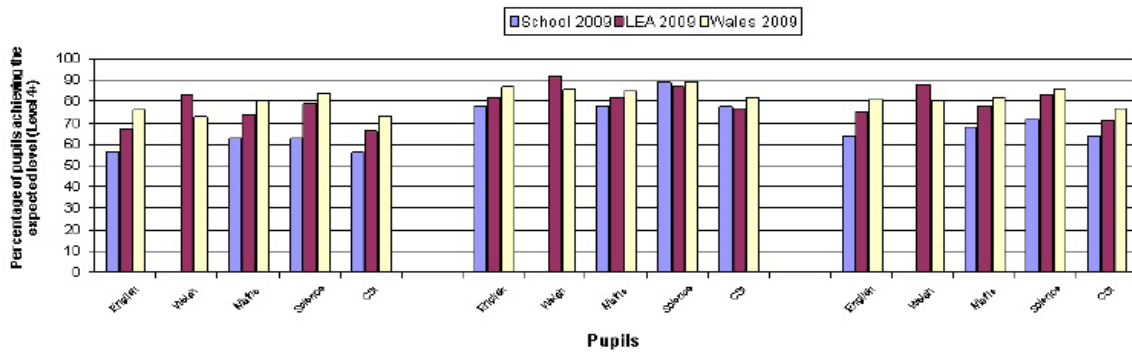
YSGOL-Y-GRAIG  
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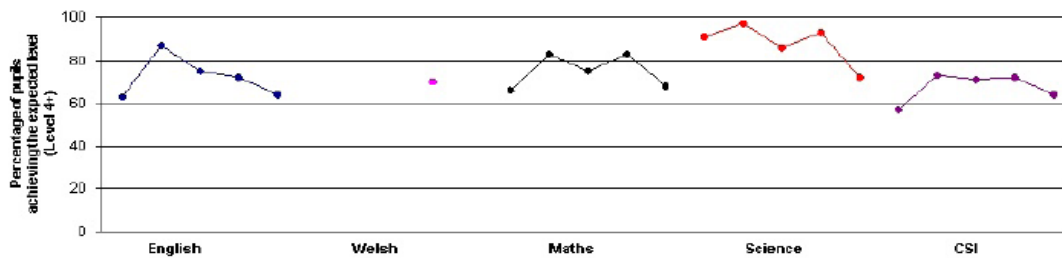
**School comparative information: National Curriculum Assessments 2009 with benchmarking**  
**Key Stage 2**

Percentage of boys, girls, and pupils achieving at least the expected level (Level 4+):

	Boys			Girls			Pupils		
	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009
English	56	67	76	78	82	87	64	75	81
Welsh	.	83	73	.	92	86	.	88	80
Maths	63	74	80	78	82	85	68	78	82
Science	63	79	84	89	87	89	72	83	86
CSI	56	66	73	78	77	82	64	71	77



**School Performance over time (2005 - 2009)**



**Contextual Information**

Benchmarked against schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.  
School's results shown in greyed boxes. Column headings refer to...

- Quartile 1 School is in the top 25 per cent.
- Quartile 2 School is in the top 50 per cent but not the top 25 per cent.
- Quartile 3 School is in the bottom 50 per cent but not the bottom 25 per cent.
- Quartile 4 School is in the bottom 25 per cent.

Free School Meal Group  
**More than or equal to 24 per cent and up to 32 per cent eligible for FSM**

	Quartile 4	Lower Quartile Boundary	Quartile 3	Median Boundary	Quartile 2	Upper Quartile Boundary	Quartile 1
English	64	71		80			87
Welsh		50		71			89
Maths	68	75		82			88
Science	72	79		88			94
CSI	64	67		75			83

**Notes:**

1. Figures for Welsh refer to attainment in Welsh first language only.
2. CSI = Core Subject Indicator. To achieve the CSI a pupil must achieve at least the expected level 4 in both Mathematics and Science and either English or Welsh first language.
3. If there were no pupils eligible for assessment in a subject for a particular year the graph will discontinue and show a gap for that year.

## Appendix 4

### **Evidence base of the inspection**

Four inspectors spent the equivalent of nine inspector days in the school and met as a team before the inspection. The team was supplemented by a nominee who was the headteacher and a peer assessor.

The inspectors visited:

- 28 lessons or part lessons of which 27 were in the six subjects inspected and one in another subject;
- registrations, assemblies and acts of collective worship; and
- a range of extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team had meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection;
- senior managers, teachers, support and administrative staff;
- groups of pupils representing each year group;
- the school council, and
- representatives of organisations associated with the school.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 79 responses to a parents' questionnaire, nearly all of which were positive;
- documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- a wide range of pupils' past and current work; and
- samples of pupils' reports.

After the inspection, the team held meetings with subject departments, senior managers and governors.

## Appendix 5

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mr Peter Mathias (Registered Inspector)	Context, Summary, Recommendations, Appendices Contributions to Key Question 1 and 2 Key Question 5 Under-fives, mathematics
Mrs Carys Taylor (Lay Inspector)	Contributions to Key Questions 1, 3 and 4
Mrs Millicent Phillips (Team member)	Contributions to Key Question 2 and 4 Key Question 7 English, science
Mr Dafydd Treharne (Team member)	Contributions to Key Question 3 Key Question 6 Welsh second language, history
Mrs Amanda Jones	Peer assessor
Mr Tom Williams (Headteacher/Nominee)	Nominee

### ***Acknowledgement***

***The inspectors wish to thank the governing body, the headteacher and all the staff for the co-operation and courtesy they received during the inspection.***

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