

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Blaenavon Hillside Nursery School
Upper Hill Street
Blaenavon
Torfaen
NP4 9NN**

School Number: 6781010

Date of Inspection: 23 February 2009

by

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

The inspection of Blaenavon Hillside Nursery School took place between 23/02/09 and 25/02/09. An independent team of inspectors, led by Wil Williams undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **full** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	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. Blaenavon Hillside Nursery School is a local authority maintained school which serves the community of Blaenavon in Torfaen. The school is a nursery for children aged three and four and there are currently 10 full-time and 94 part-time children on roll. Children are admitted to the nursery after their third birthday. The number of children on roll for the last three years has remained fairly constant.
2. The school is broadly organised into three mixed aged base groups and one smaller 'nurture' group for children with additional learning needs. It is staffed by two teachers which include the head teacher, three full time and one part time practitioner.
3. Almost all children (98 per cent) are from English speaking homes and the remainder are from ethnic minority groups and nationalities that are learning English as an additional language. There are no children from Welsh speaking homes and Welsh is taught as a second language.
4. The school considers its catchment area to be neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged but with some areas which are economically disadvantaged and are designated Communities First areas. There is one child who is 'looked after' by the local authority.
5. The attainment of children varies greatly on entry with Baseline assessments indicating a below average attainment for many children. Approximately 10 per cent of children have been identified with additional learning needs but there are no children who have a statement of additional learning needs.
6. There have been no significant changes in the nature of the school since it was last inspected in January 2003. The head teacher has been in post for ten years.

The school's priorities and targets

7. The school aims to provide children with a happy start to school life in an environment that is stimulating, interesting and nurtures an inquisitive mind.
8. The main priorities and targets for the school during 2008-09 include to:
 - further develop foundation phase planning and assessment;
 - improve the teaching and learning of Welsh; and to
 - further evaluate the work of the school through the Effective Early Learning project.

Summary

9. The school successfully fulfils its main aim, to produce happy, confident, enquiring children, interested in life and enthusiastic about the challenges they encounter.

Table of grades awarded

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

10. The school's judgements in its self-evaluation report agreed with the inspector's findings in five of the seven key questions.

Standards and progress

11. In the lessons observed in the areas of learning inspected, children's standards of achievement are as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
10%	90%	0%	0%	0%

12. These percentages compare well to the national picture reported by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) in the latest annual report where nationally standards in 10 per cent of lessons are Grade 1, 70 per cent Grade 2 and 19 per cent Grade 3.
13. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the children are making good progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes.

Areas of learning for under-fives

Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity	Grade 1
Language, literacy and communication	Grade 2
Mathematical development	Grade 2
Welsh Language development	Grade 2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Grade 2
Physical development	Grade 2
Creative development	Grade 2

14. All children, regardless of social, ethnic or linguistic background achieve well across all aspects of learning. Although baseline assessment scores for children on entry are consistently below those of similar schools, by the time they leave the nursery most children's performance is often better than that of other schools in the Local Authority (LA). Children with additional learning needs make outstanding progress towards achieving their individual targets.
15. Children make good progress in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). They make appropriate good progress in their problem solving skills.
16. Most children make good progress in their bilingual competency. They have an increasing passive understanding of Welsh with a few beginning to use individual words and short phrases independently.
17. Children of all ages make good progress in their learning. They are naturally curious about their environment and respond positively to the stimulating and challenging activities that are provided for them.
18. Children's behaviour and their attitudes towards learning are outstanding features of the school. They demonstrate respect, care and concern for each other, for adults and for their school environment. Their personal, moral and social development is also outstanding.
19. The inclusive nature of the school helps children develop a good understanding of equality and a respect for diversity and prepares them well to take an active role in the life and work of the local community.
20. Attendance rates for the past three terms average 83 per cent with much of the absences caused by early childhood illnesses. Children are very well supported when they return to school after a period of absence.

The quality of education and training

21. The quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
0%	100%	0%	0%	0%

22. These percentages compare well to the latest national picture where teaching is Grade 1 in 14 per cent of lessons, Grade 2 in 66 per cent of lessons and Grade 3 in 18 per cent of lessons.
23. Relationships between children and adults are good with outstanding features. Practitioners demonstrate great care and concern for children and have consistently high expectations of behaviour and self-discipline. They treat all children equally and fairly. A calm, happy and purposeful working atmosphere is apparent in every area of the school.

24. A wide variety of teaching strategies and resources are successfully used to stimulate and maintain children's interest. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to ask open-ended questions, challenge children to think for themselves and develop their problem-solving skills
25. The overall quality of assessment, recording and reporting on children's progress is good.
26. The curriculum provided is broad, balanced and firmly based on the content and approaches of the Framework for Children's Learning in the Foundation Phase. Local visits effectively enrich the curriculum provided.
27. The provision for personal and social education is good with outstanding features.
28. Children's spiritual, moral and cultural development is promoted extremely well. Children are given many opportunities to marvel at the wonders of the natural world and every session ends with a short verse and prayer.
29. Good opportunities are provided for children to appreciate their own cultural traditions and those of others. Children's bilingual skills are promoted successfully.
30. Partnerships with parents and links with the community are strong. Parents play an active part in the life of the school and are kept well-informed of school events.
31. Great progress has been made towards promoting education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Children's environmental awareness is also very well developed.
32. The school places a high priority on pastoral care throughout the school and outstanding care, guidance and support are provided for children. The head teacher regularly consults parents and carers, listens carefully to them and takes into consideration their views and opinions.
33. The induction procedures for children entering the school are outstanding. The home visits made by staff and the gradual introduction of children over a four day period ensure that they settle quickly and confidently into their new surroundings.
34. Staff provide exceptional personal support and guidance to children. Children are confident in seeking the help and support of adults in the school; they are listened to and treated with kindness and respect.
35. Very effective strategies are in place to promote healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle, and parents are supportive of this approach.
36. The overall quality of the provision for children with additional learning needs is good with outstanding features. Additional support for children who have

learning difficulties or physical disabilities is extremely well organised so that they enjoy full access to the school's provision, both indoors and out.

37. Equality for all is firmly embedded in the school's ethos and children and adults value and respect the contribution of others regardless of their ability, gender, race or background.

Leadership and management

38. The quality leadership provided by the head teacher is very good and provides the school's work with a clear sense of direction. She is ably supported by staff and governors who are committed to providing the best possible learning environment for all children.
39. The governing body have a good understanding of the school's needs and play an important role in supporting school development.
40. The school's self-evaluation system is thorough and systematic and provides useful evidence of strengths, shortcomings and developmental needs. Its outcomes are closely aligned with the priorities in the School Strategic Plan.
41. Good progress has been made in addressing the two key issues identified in the previous inspection report.
42. The school employs a good number of qualified and experienced teachers and practitioners and is very well resourced.
43. The extensive garden areas surrounding the building provide a rich variety of areas for exploring and for stimulating and exciting outdoor play. This is an outstanding feature.
44. All the school's resources are managed effectively and efficiently giving value for money.

Recommendations

45. In order to move the school forward, the governing body and staff need to:
- R1 provide more opportunities for children to develop their problem solving skills:
and to
 - R2 continue to improve attendance rates.

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

46. The inspection team's findings match the school's judgement in its self-evaluation report.
47. In the areas of learning inspected, children's standards of achievement are as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
10%	90%	0%	0%	0%

48. These percentages compare well to the latest national picture where standards in 10 per cent of lessons were Grade 1, 70 per cent are Grade 2 and 19 per cent are Grade 3.
49. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the children are making good progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes.

Areas of learning for under-fives

Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity	Grade 1
Language, literacy and communication	Grade 2
Mathematical development	Grade 2
Welsh Language development	Grade 2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Grade 2
Physical development	Grade 2
Creative development	Grade 2

50. All children, regardless of social, ethnic or linguistic background achieve well across all aspects of learning. Although baseline assessment results of children on entry are consistently below those of similar schools, by the time they leave the nursery most children's performance is often better than that of other schools in the LA. Children with additional learning needs make outstanding progress towards achieving their individual targets.
51. At present there is a small gender gap with girls generally performing better than boys in some areas of learning. However, this issue has been addressed by the school and has led to improved performance by boys.
52. Children make good progress in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). They listen intently to questions, instructions and group presentations and express their views with

- increasing confidence using an ever increasing range of vocabulary. They understand how books work and know about some of the functions of writing.
53. In practical situations, children use mathematical apparatus confidently and have a good grasp of number, symbols, shape and the uses of money.
 54. All children are confident users of ICT equipment working independently on a broad range of programs.
 55. Although children make good appropriate progress in their problem solving skills further development is often hampered by the lack of open-ended activities that require children to think for themselves and to devise their own ways of working.
 56. Most children make good progress in their bilingual competency. They have an increasing passive understanding of Welsh with a few beginning to use individual words and short phrases independently.
 57. Children of all ages make good progress in their learning within a very short period of time. They are naturally curious about their environment and respond positively to the stimulating and challenging activities that are provided for them. Sensitive and timely intervention by adults enables them to reflect on their learning and to consider how to work more effectively.
 58. By the time they reach the end of their period in the nursery, most children have acquired the necessary personal, social and academic skills that will enable them to continue their progress in the neighbouring primary school.
 59. Children's behaviour and their attitudes towards learning are outstanding features of the school and contribute significantly to the standards they achieve in all areas of learning, particularly in their personal and social development. The school is a supportive, welcoming and friendly community where all children are valued and nurtured.
 60. Children enjoy their work and play. They listen carefully to staff, join in activities with enthusiasm and are keen to do their best. They take delight in their achievements and in the achievements of others.
 61. Throughout the school, children demonstrate respect, care and concern for each other, for adults and for their school environment. They are happy, settled and growing in confidence.
 62. Children are developing the capacity to work independently and are encouraged to make their own choices and decisions. They are confident and eager to explore new learning situations.
 63. Children's personal, moral and social development is excellent. The exemplary relationships that children enjoy with staff, the supportive ethos of the school and the high priority given to children's emotional and personal well

being enables children to develop a secure set of personal values, based on care and consideration for others.

64. The inclusive nature of the school, the emphasis on respect for everyone and the experiences they enjoy when they learn about life in other countries helps children develop a good understanding of equality and a respect for diversity, relative to their young age.
65. The school is highly successful in preparing children to take an active role in the life and work of the local community.
66. Attendance rates for the past three terms average 83 per cent. Much of the absence is caused by early childhood illnesses, and children are very well supported when they return to school after a period of absence. The school makes every effort to improve attendance rates and works closely with parents and carers to promote the importance of regular and punctual attendance of children.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

67. The inspection team's findings match the school's judgement in its self-evaluation report.

68. The quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
0%	100%	0%	0%	0%

69. These percentages compare well to the latest national picture where teaching is Grade 1 in 14 per cent of lessons, Grade 2 in 66 per cent of lessons and Grade 3 in 18 per cent of lessons.

70. A very strong feature of the quality of teaching is its consistency throughout the school. All sessions led by teachers or teaching assistants were good with no important shortcomings. This is because activities are jointly planned by all members of staff so that there is a shared understanding of content, expectations and objectives. They have a good awareness of how young children learn.

71. Practitioners provide a wide range of activities that succeed in capturing children's interest and engaging them in learning. These include a good balance between adult-focused sessions and the provision of resources and activities that children choose independently. Practitioners are skilled at intervening sensitively in children's learning, making suggestions and asking questions to prompt children's thinking and develop their language.

72. Relationships between children and adults are good with outstanding features. Practitioners demonstrate great care and concern for children and have consistently high expectations of behaviour and self-discipline. They treat all children equally and fairly. A calm, happy and purposeful working atmosphere is apparent in every area of the school.

73. A wide variety of teaching strategies and resources are successfully used to stimulate and maintain children's interest. Practitioners skilfully lead activities and make good use of the time available, allowing for the concentration span of very young children. However, occasionally opportunities are sometimes missed to ask open-ended questions, challenge children to think for themselves and develop their problem-solving skills.

74. Adults effectively promote children's bilingual skills. Many daily routines such as recording the weather and counting the number of children present include purposeful use of the Welsh language.

75. The overall quality of assessment procedures is good with no important shortcomings and they meet statutory requirements.
76. The school carefully tracks children's personal, social and academic progress from baseline assessments in October. Close observations of individual children as they engage in their activities play a key role in determining the next steps in their learning. At the end of every topic, written evaluations of children's responses to the learning experiences provided clearly describe what they have achieved.
77. Written 'progress' reports to parents after one term give a good picture of how well their children are settling into nursery. End of year reports clearly describe children's progress and achievements and include useful pointers as to how they can help their children at home.

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

78. The inspection team's findings do not match the school's self-evaluation of grade 1 for this key question. This is because the team did not identify enough outstanding features to justify an overall grade 1 for this key question.
79. The school provides a rich variety of relevant learning experiences that effectively meet all children's needs and interests. It successfully fulfils its main aim, "to produce happy, confident, enquiring children, interested in life and enthusiastic about the challenges they encounter".
80. The curriculum offered is broad, balanced and firmly based on the content and approaches of the Framework for Children's Learning in the Foundation Phase. It fully complies with legal requirements. The school takes a topic-based approach to long-term planning that ensures thorough coverage of all elements in the seven areas of learning for children of this age.
81. Arrangements for grouping learners are well organised and flexible, so that all children enjoy learning experiences as part of a whole class, in groups, pairs and as individuals. The outdoor environment is in constant use and children enjoy many worthwhile experiences there.
82. Daily planning meetings attended by all members of staff ensure that they are alerted to any issues concerning individual children and can thus more effectively meet their needs. At the same time, planned learning experiences are modified in the light of children's responses to them.
83. An integral and co-ordinated part of the school's approach to planning is the development of the key skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing, numeracy and use of ICT. These skills are highlighted on all teaching/learning strategy sheets. The school is at an early stage of planning more open-ended

challenges for children to use and develop their creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

84. Visits in the wider area to places such as Blaenavon Ironworks, Big Pit, the library, health centre and local park effectively enrich the curriculum provided. Parents use the equipment and book lending libraries and story sacks to further extend children's learning at home.
85. The provision for personal and social education is good with outstanding features. The school places an extremely strong emphasis on this aspect of its work. Children's personal and social skills are consistently developed through all seven areas of learning and in their relationships with adults and their peers. The school sees the development of social skills as a pre-requisite for effective learning.
86. Children's spiritual, moral and cultural development is promoted extremely well. There are many opportunities for children to marvel at the wonders of the natural world and every session ends with a short verse and prayer. Daily acts of collective worship are of a good standard and fulfil statutory requirements.
87. Clear rules and expectation underpin the exceptionally positive ethos of the school. Children are encouraged to consider and predict the consequences of their actions. Members of staff are very good role models. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, one hundred per cent of parents agreed that the school's values and attitudes have a good effect on their children.
88. Through a range of topics and the celebration of various festivals such as St. David's Day and Chinese New Year the school provides many opportunities for children to appreciate their own cultural traditions and those of others.
89. Partnerships with parents and links with the community are strong. Nearly all parents agree that they are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school and find it easy to approach with questions or problems. A great deal of helpful information for parents, including examples of children's work on the current topic, is prominently displayed in the entrance to the school. There is personal contact between members of staff and parents every day and good support for fund raising activities.
90. Links with other schools, colleges and training institutions are good. The school plays frequent host to students on a variety of work experience and training courses.
91. Topics such as 'people who help us', role-play activities, for example, as postal workers and visits from people from a number of different professions effectively raise children's awareness of the world of work.
92. The school effectively promotes children's bilingual skills. Incidental Welsh is used throughout the day and the language is evident in many captions around

the school. The development of children's awareness of Welsh culture and heritage is fully integrated through all areas of learning.

93. Great progress has been made over the last couple of years in promoting education for sustainable development and global citizenship. The 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' message is reflected in many aspects of the life and work of the school. Children's environmental awareness is very well developed through 'Eco' songs, recycling, litter gathering and energy monitoring activities. The school has reduced its utility bills as a result of these activities.
94. The school has a very close partnership with colleagues working with 'Flying Start', a programme to support very young children and their families, and other initiatives such the 'Language and Play' and 'Numeracy and Play' programmes. These partnerships make a positive contribution to tackling social disadvantage, reflect national priorities for lifelong learning and help raise levels of achievement for all.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

95. The inspection team judged there to be sufficient outstanding features in the way the school cares for, guides and supports children to award a grade 1, compared to the grade 2 judgement made by the school in its self evaluation report.
96. The school places a high priority on pastoral care throughout the school and outstanding care, guidance and support are provided for children. The head teacher and staff are highly successful in creating a calm, caring and supportive environment where children feel safe, secure and respected. There is a very strong community spirit and the school is very welcoming to visitors.
97. The school works in full and productive partnership with a wide range of agencies and support services to ensure children's needs are carefully assessed and provided for. This multi-disciplinary approach is particularly beneficial for children in challenging and vulnerable circumstances.
98. The school enjoys close and effective working partnerships with parents and carers, which contribute significantly to quality of support and guidance offered to pupils. An outstanding feature is the way in which the head teacher regularly consults parents and carers, listens carefully to them and takes into consideration their views and opinions.
99. The induction procedures for children entering the school are outstanding. The home visits made by staff and the gradual introduction of children over a four day period ensure that they settle quickly and confidently into their new surroundings.

100. Staff provide exceptional personal support and guidance to children. Children's individual needs are well known to staff and a carefully structured pastoral programme ensures these needs are met with sensitivity. Children are confident in seeking the help and support of adults in the school; they are listened to and treated with kindness and respect.
101. The monitoring of behaviour, attendance, punctuality and performance is thorough and rigorous, and early intervention ensures any issue is dealt with swiftly and efficiently. The head teacher has undertaken considerable research into the reasons for absence and continues to ensure support is readily available to children and families who are experiencing difficulties.
102. The school has clear, well-documented policies and procedures for promoting children's health, safety and well-being, which are implemented carefully by staff and the governing body.
103. Very effective strategies are in place to promote healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle, and parents are supportive of this approach. Children are encouraged to eat fruit and healthy snacks, and they have access to a wide range of physical activities that contribute to their well being.
104. A clear policy and set of procedures are in place to deal with child protection issues. The head teacher is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and she ensures all staff are aware of the correct procedures to be followed and that training is regularly updated.
105. The overall quality of the provision for children with additional learning needs is good with outstanding features and takes full account of the statutory framework for inclusive education. The school effectively identifies those children who have additional learning needs through observations, baseline assessments shortly after they enter the nursery and through referral from other agencies.
106. Children's needs are accurately diagnosed and individual education plans established. These include clear personal targets and very helpful suggestions about techniques and resources that will help the child to achieve them. There is very close liaison with parents who are invited to come and discuss their children's progress and ways in which they can further support them at home.
107. Additional support for children who have learning difficulties or physical disabilities is extremely well targeted and organised so that they enjoy full access to the school's provision, both indoors and out. Grouping arrangements are very well organised, but flexible, so that children can enjoy participating in large group sessions.
108. There are very effective strategies to deal with oppressive behaviour, including bullying, racial discrimination and all other forms of harassment.

109. The school provides outstanding support for children whose behaviour might impede their own progress and that of others. The consistent approach to positive behaviour management and personal and social development ensures that children with emotional and behavioural difficulties make excellent progress in developing self-control.
110. The school is successful in recognising the diversity of children's backgrounds and takes this into account when planning and delivering its support and guidance. All staff know children and their families well and are sensitive to their individual circumstances and needs.
111. There very effective policies and procedures in place to promote good race relations, equality and diversity and to deal with any stereotypical views and expectations. Equality for all is firmly embedded in the school's ethos and children and adults value and respect the contribution of others regardless of their ability, gender, race or background.
112. The school does all it can to ensure the equal treatment of disabled learners; an accessibility audit has been undertaken, and a new disability equality scheme and clear action plan are in place.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

113. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
114. The quality of leadership provided by the head teacher is very good and provides the school's work with a clear sense of direction. She is ably supported by staff and governors who use a broad range of information about all aspects of the school's performance to develop policies and strategies. There is a commitment to continuous improvement, raising standards of achievement and improving the quality of the educational provision for all children.
115. Common values about learning, behaviour and relationships are shared by all teachers and practitioners. This contributes substantially towards developing good team work and a sense of common purpose.
116. The school's policies and practices promote equality of opportunity for all. All staff are valued as important members of the school team and are recognised for the contribution they make to the school. They undertake a good proportion of curricular and other duties and are fully involved in the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and provision.
117. National and local priorities such as sustainable development, the Healthy Schools Initiative, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and establishing the Foundation Phase feature highly in the school's everyday work. The school plays an active part in the community and has forged close links with numerous other institutions and local groups.
118. Procedures for setting both individual targets for children and whole school targets in the School Strategic Plan are effective. The targets set stem from rigorous assessment and self-evaluation and are both challenging and achievable.
119. There are effective procedures for managing and improving staff performance. Objectives for all members of staff are set through the Performance Management system and are closely aligned to their continuous professional development needs.
120. Members of the recently formed governing body have a good understanding of the school's developmental needs and by working closely with the head teacher are influential in setting the strategic direction of the school. They play an important role in supporting school development and have recently undertaken their monitoring and evaluation duties. They fully appreciate the

importance of their role as a critical friend to the school. Regulatory and legal requirements are fulfilled thoroughly.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

121. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation.
122. The head teacher, staff and governors have a good overview of the work of the school and are committed to raising standards. The self-evaluation system which informs school improvement planning, follows well-established processes and provides useful evidence of strengths, shortcomings and developmental needs.
123. The school's judgements in its self-evaluation report agreed with the inspector's findings in five of the seven key questions. Where they differ in Key Questions 3 where the school's grade is higher than the inspection team's judgement and Key Question 4 where it is lower.
124. All staff regularly evaluate teaching and learning, assessment data is rigorously analysed each term and an action plan produced to ensure that any shortcomings identified are quickly addressed. The head teacher regularly monitors pupils' work and the quality of teaching to ensure that monitoring is consistent.
125. The views of parents are canvassed both formally and informally and any issues that arise are resolved immediately.
126. The school self-evaluation report is well structured and clear and its judgements founded and supported by a good range of evidence. Its outcomes are closely aligned with the priorities in the School Strategic Plan.
127. The School Strategic Plan is a collaborative effort involving all staff and governors and includes priorities that are consistent with the school's aims and developmental needs. It includes clear targets for action, specifies the personnel responsible for implementation and identifies success criteria for monitoring and evaluation. Priorities are fully-costed and the professional development needs of staff are noted.
128. Targeted self-evaluation has impacted directly on improving standards and provision in many areas which include Welsh, boys' mathematics and procedures for assessment and recording.
129. The good progress made in raising standards of attainment and in addressing shortcomings in resources and accommodation indicates that the school's actions have brought about significant improvement.

130. Good progress has been made in addressing the two key issues identified in the previous inspection report. Planning for the promotion of key skills is now good and more opportunities have been provided for pupils to develop their creative skills.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

131. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
132. The school employs a good number of qualified and experienced teachers and practitioners enabling it to provide a broad, balanced and stimulating range of activities for its children. The head teacher and staff are well supported by a committed school clerk and caretaker who ensure that daily routines run smoothly.
133. The professional development of staff is given high priority by the head teacher with all being encouraged to undertake long-term courses and to take advantage of every opportunity to increase their professional confidence and competence. This impacts directly on the high quality of teaching and learning that is evident in the school.
134. All staff are effectively deployed and good use is made of their individual expertise. Arrangements for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time are effective. They have a positive impact on children's learning and ensure there is good continuity in their learning experiences.
135. The head teacher and governors have responded positively to the requirements of workforce remodelling and have implemented the teachers' workload agreement.
136. Generous support from parent and the community over several years has ensured that the school is well-resourced in all areas of the curriculum. Resources are deployed and used effectively and are easily accessible to pupils due. The school is also good at accessing grants and resources from external and local businesses.
137. In spite of its age, the layout of the accommodation fulfils the requirements of the school very effectively. The rooms are of good size and are used effectively by staff. The learning environment is further enhanced by the rich variety of displays exhibited in all areas of the building.
138. The extensive garden areas surrounding the building provide a rich variety of areas for exploring and for stimulating and exciting outdoor play. This contributes substantially to the quality of learning experiences provided for the children and to their personal and social development. This is an outstanding feature.

139. All the school's resources are managed effectively and efficiently. The careful budgetary arrangements ensure that specific sums of money have been earmarked to support the school's main priorities and reasonable funds are kept in reserve in order to respond to any unexpected eventuality. Financial control is stringent, and the head teacher and governing body monitors spending rigorously to ensure cost effectiveness.
140. The school gives value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Foundation Phase

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity

Grade 1: Good features with outstanding features

Outstanding features

142. All children make outstanding progress in developing their personal and social skills, often from a very low base. They rapidly develop understanding of the nursery's rules and expectations and their behaviour is excellent. They display considerable degrees of self-control in whole class sessions, responding with enjoyment and maturity to exciting activities and quickly calming down again when appropriate. Throughout the school, relationships with adults are extremely good.

Good features

143. Levels of concentration are good and most children maintain their focus on what they are doing for a good period of time. Most children are keen to engage in new learning experiences both in school and on visits beyond the immediate locality.
144. Nearly all children play very happily alongside one another and are beginning to co-operate in their activities. For example, they enjoy pulling or pushing their friends along on wheeled toys and increasingly co-operate in their role-play. Most of them are willing to share resources and wait for their turn to use them. All children demonstrate a very good understanding of class routines. They move without fuss from whole class activities to individual tasks they choose for themselves.
145. All children are becoming increasingly aware of their own feelings and those of others. They understand the need to take care of their environment, conscientiously checking that lights are switched off, water is not wasted and putting fruit peel in compost bins. Their awareness of cultural diversity is developing well through topics that include celebrations of festivals such as Diwali and Hannukah.

Shortcomings

146. There are no important shortcomings.

Language, literacy and communication

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

147. The majority of children listen attentively to adults and carry out instructions correctly. On entry to nursery, a significant minority of children are reluctant to speak about their activities with visitors, but do so with increasing confidence when supported by familiar adults. Older children communicate well with one another to create and sustain imaginary role-play scenarios.
148. Most children listen with real interest and enjoyment to a story, follow the pictures and make relevant observations. Less-able children respond to questions with brief, but generally appropriate, answers. More-able children are beginning to sequence events in the story. Most children show an interest in books and handle them carefully, often choosing to look at them independently in the book corner or follow a story using headphones. They have memorised and enjoy reciting a good repertoire of simple action rhymes.
149. Through role-play and other activities, children are becoming aware of the purpose of writing. For example, when going 'on safari' in the school grounds, they 'write' the names of animals they spot and in the garden 'café' they take customers' 'orders'. They freely experiment with mark making at the writing table, on the chalk board in the 'café' and using the interactive whiteboard.

Shortcomings

150. There are no important shortcomings.

Mathematical development

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

151. Children's understanding of number and number notation develops well. During registration periods and other daily routines, they count up to twenty objects with increasing accuracy and are beginning to recognise individual numerals. They know several number songs and rhymes and use them regularly to help them count.
152. Children's ability to use mathematical language during oral and practical tasks develops appropriately. Good progress is made in their understanding of measures and money. They use scales correctly when compare the mass of two objects and are becoming increasingly aware of the use of money and its value when purchasing goods.
153. Good progress is made in children's understanding of shape. They play and make models with shapes such as building blocks imaginatively and recognise familiar shapes in their environment.

154. Throughout the age range, good progress is made in the children's ability to represent and interpret data with most children being very confident in sorting, matching and classifying sets of objects according to specific criteria such as colour or size.

Shortcomings

155. There are no important shortcomings.

Welsh Language development

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

156. Although the majority of the children only attend one session each day and have only been at the nursery for a relatively small period, almost all make good progress in their Welsh oracy skills. They listen and respond simply to what they hear within the classroom environment with growing attention and concentration. They partake very enthusiastically during registration periods by responding in Welsh to their names being called out and will greet one another using short phrases. They use learned phrases effectively when discussing the weather and take great pride in their ability to understand and speak simple Welsh. They are very eager learners.
157. Many of the children show an interest in reading Welsh books and use picture cues effectively when following the main gist of a story.

Shortcomings

158. There are no important shortcomings.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

159. Children make good progress in their exploring and experimenting skills as they work both in the indoor and outdoor environment. During their 'safari' in the outdoor area, many ask sensible questions and listen closely to the ideas of adults and other children around them. They demonstrate good observation skills when looking for animals amongst the trees in the school surroundings and are beginning to use magnifying glasses properly for observing small insects and objects. Most have inquisitive minds and have a relatively clear understanding of what they wish to discover.
160. Children's understanding of places and people within their local surroundings develops well. They describe in general terms their journey to school and through focused visits such as to Blaenavon Ironworks, are familiar with some of the natural and human features of their area. Visits to the baby clinic and

the local fire station have increased their appreciation of the contributions made by various people in the community to their health and well-being.

161. Children's knowledge and understanding of time and people develops appropriately. Most are able to sequence the daily routines of the nursery confidently and recognise that many seasonal changes occur in their natural environment.
162. Almost all children know the names of the main external parts of the human body and can describe some of the things that affect their growth and wellbeing. They discuss the jungle environment very knowledgeable and confidently name many of the wild animal and creatures who live there. Tending and growing plants in the outdoor area has contributed substantially towards developing their understanding of living things.
163. Children's active involvement in the preparation and making of sandwiches has increased their appreciation of how materials change when mixed or heated.

Shortcomings

164. There are no important shortcomings.

Physical development

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

165. Children's fine manipulative skills are developing well through activities such as kneading, squeezing and shaping playdough and using tools such as cutters and rolling pins. They handle paintbrushes, crayons and glue sticks with a good degree of dexterity. In the sand tray, they use spades, buckets and vehicles with good control, tipping, filling and moving sand from one area to another.
166. The majority of children pedal and steer tricycles with good control. They show increasing strength and co-ordination when using the swings; a few children can push off independently with their feet and adjust their balance to maintain a swinging motion. Most children are becoming proficient in using a range of climbing and balancing equipment. They eagerly explore less familiar climbing equipment in the local park, moving across a ladder using hands and knees and sliding down poles.
167. All children are developing a good understanding of the need to eat healthy foods and take exercise in order to make them "big and strong".

Shortcomings

168. There are no important shortcomings.

Creative development

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

169. After looking closely at a variety of small creatures such as spiders, a praying mantis and centipedes, the majority of children make careful drawing of them that show a good awareness of lines, shapes and some of their key characteristics. All children confidently explore the colours and properties of paint in their individual paintings and when making large-scale models. They competently use the interactive whiteboard, selecting colours and creating effective portraits and other images.
170. Most children enjoy singing together as a whole class and appreciate the difference between singing quietly and loudly, controlling their voices appropriately. An increasing sense of rhythm is apparent in the actions they use to accompany their songs. They play simple percussion instruments with great enthusiasm, moderating tempo and dynamics in response to cues from an adult.
171. Through their exploration of animals of the rainforest, children make some imaginative suggestions for ways in which they might move like monkeys and express their ideas effectively through a variety of movements.

Shortcomings

172. Although there are no important shortcomings, a few examples of children's paintings and models lack originality.

School's response to the inspection

The team at Blaenavon Hillside Nursery School are pleased with the outcome of our recent ESTYN full inspection.

The inspection team recognised that "the school successfully fulfils its main aim to produce happy, confident, enquiring children interested in life and enthusiastic about the challenges which they encounter."

We are pleased that the team found that the standards of achievement of the pupils and the quality of teaching by all the staff are higher than the Welsh national standards and that "children with additional learning needs make outstanding progress".

Our pupil's excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning have always been a source of pride, and we are pleased that the team experienced this during the inspection.

We are delighted that the inspectors also considered that relationships between children and adults are "good with outstanding features" and that "a calm, happy and purposeful working atmosphere is apparent in every area of the school".

The school's success in recent initiatives such as education for sustainable development and global citizenship were also recognised.

We will continue to strive to offer and develop early years education of the highest quality and we will produce an Action Plan to address the recommendations. The Report and the Action Plan will be distributed to Parents and our progress on the action plan will be reported in the Governing Body's report to Parents.



Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Blaenavon Hillside Nursery School
School type	Nursery
Age-range of pupils	3 – 4 years
Address of school	Upper Hill Street, Blaenavon, Torfaen
Postcode	NP4 9NN
Telephone number	01495 790257
Head teacher	Mrs Lesley Addis
Date of appointment	1/09/1998
Chair of governors	Mrs Claire Higgins
Registered inspector	Wil Williams
Dates of inspection	23 – 25 February 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	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	57

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	2	0	2

Staffing information	
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	8:1
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1.9:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection	
Term	Nursery
Spring 2008	80%
Summer 2008	83%
Autumn 2008	86%

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	n/a
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	None

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results

There are no end of year national assessments for nursery children.

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Three inspectors, including the school's nominee, spent the equivalent of seven inspector days in the school and met as a team before the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

- twelve lessons or part lessons; and
- registrations, assemblies and acts of collective worship.

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; and
- representatives of organisations associated with the school.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- twenty responses to parents' questionnaire;
- 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 team held meetings with teachers, senior managers and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Type	Responsibilities
Wil Williams	Rgl	Context; Summary; Recommendations; Annexes; Key questions 1; 5; 6 and 7. Mathematical development, Welsh Language development, Knowledge and understanding of the world.
Stephanie James	Team	Key questions 2; 3; 4. Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity, language literacy and communication, physical development, creative development.
Janet Warr	Lay	Contributions to key questions 1; 3; 4 and 7
Lesley Addis	Nominee	Provision of information

Contractor:

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Acknowledgement

The visiting inspectors wish to thank the governors, the head and all the staff for the co-operation and courtesy they received during the inspection.