

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Comin Infants School
Hirwaun Road
Trecynon
Aberdare
CF44 8LU**

School Number: 6742116

Date of Inspection: 15/06/09

by

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Comin Infants 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 Comin Infants School took place between 15/06/09 and 17/06/09. An independent team of inspectors, led by Luned Eleri Betts, 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 **short** 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. Comin Infants School is situated in the village of Trecynon on the outskirts of the town of Aberdare in the Cynon Valley. The local authority (LA) is Rhondda Cynon Taff. The main school building is a single story construction dating from 1894. In 2002-2003 it was restructured internally and extended to provide better accommodation for both pupils and staff. Classrooms lead out to an attractive main yard, which includes a soft play area and sensory gardens. The accommodation and site are shared with Comin Junior School.
2. One hundred and seventy four learners are currently on roll, a figure that includes 64 full-time children in the nursery classes who are admitted the month after their third birthday. There has been a steady decline in the school population since the last inspection. However in the autumn term of 2008, due to unforeseen difficulties with their own building, a local nursery school with a learning support class was re-housed within Comin Infant School. At present it functions as a school within a school under the acting headship of the headteacher of the infant school, who is also acting headteacher of Comin Junior School. Consultation has started in respect of the amalgamation of all three schools which could take place in 2010.
3. The majority of learners come from the immediate locality, an area that is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. The traditional catchment area of the school includes private local authority and association housing. The attainment of children on entry represents the full range of ability.
4. Currently 27.5% of pupils are registered as being eligible for free school meals, a percentage which is above both local and national figures. Twenty four learners (around 14%) are on the school's special educational needs (SEN) register, a figure which is lower than local and national percentages. None has a statement of SEN and no pupil is disapplied from the national curriculum (NC). None has been excluded during the last twelve months.
5. Pupils are taught in six classes, which include two nursery classes; seven teachers, including the headteacher, are employed. During the inspection a supply teacher was in charge of the Y1 class covering a maternity leave, and another supply teacher covered the absence of the deputy headteacher.
6. English is the predominant language of almost all pupils. No pupil uses Welsh at home. One per cent of the school population is from minority ethnic groups. Two pupils receive support teaching in English as an additional language (EAL) while three pupils are looked after by the LA.
7. The school was last inspected in June 2003. It received the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the third time and the Eco school Green Flag Award in 2007 and is working towards the third leaf of the Healthy Schools' award.

The school's priorities and targets

8. The school's main aims are to:

- develop a learning environment which is happy, safe, caring, exciting and full of opportunities;
- pursue excellence through a stimulating and well-resourced environment, enthusiastic and energising staff, the development and encouragement of everyone, raising self-esteem and awareness of others and encouraging respect ; and
- deliver an exciting curriculum through excellent and enthusiastic teaching, innovation, encouraging reflection and thinking skills, providing opportunities to broaden creativity and self-worth, and celebrating the achievements of each member of the school community.

9. The school's priorities for this year are to:

- provide all pupils with a range of challenging activities that enhances their learning through the development of skills, enabling them to be successful learners;
- ensure that the needs of all learners are met through further development of teaching and assessment practices;
- further improve behaviour, attendance and punctuality to ensure these aspects do not have a negative impact on learning;
- continue to enhance learning experiences by building on the work already undertaken to achieve the Eco School Award and Healthy School Award; and
- ensure consistency of practice and maintain a positive environment that supports learning for everyone at the school.

Summary

10. Comin Infants School provides a good quality education within a supportive, stimulating environment. All adults work very well as a team to ensure that learners are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Staff successfully promote pupils' awareness and understanding of their responsibilities to their community and the wider world.

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

11. The inspection team agreed with the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report in all seven key questions.
12. In NC assessments at the end of key stage 1(KS1), pupils' attainment is consistently above local and national percentages. In 2008 all pupils achieved a Level 2, the level expected of pupils who are seven years of age, in English, mathematics and science and the core subject indicator (CS1), which is the number of pupils attaining a Level 2 in all three subjects. Girls slightly outperform boys especially in writing.
13. When compared with schools who had the same number of free school meals, results in 2006 and 2007 were consistently in the upper fifty per cent. When placed in a group which have a higher number of pupils claiming free school meals in 2008, results were in the upper quarter in mathematics, science and the CS1, while in English they were between the middle and upper quarter of schools.
14. The overall quality of educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes.

15. The majority of learners achieve their potential; while those with SEN often exceed the targets set for them. Pupils succeed well regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
16. Learners achieve consistently good levels in key skills. Standards are especially good in KS1 where many pupils often make very good progress in literacy, numeracy and the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT). Bilingual competence is good overall; in the Y1 and Y2 class pupils make very good progress in learning Welsh.
17. Most pupils make good progress in the development of their personal, social and learning skills. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities and have a well developed awareness of the diversity in society and in their own community. They are very well prepared for effective participation in the work-place.
18. The majority of pupils are motivated and work productively. Their capacity for working independently is good and has outstanding features in KS1. The majority behave well and show respect for their peers and adults.
19. At 91.03%, attendance in the three terms prior to the inspection was below the national percentages, as well as the LA and similar schools.

The quality of education and training

Grades for teaching

20. The quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
27%	41%	32%	0%	0%

21. These figures are below the national averages as published in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) annual report for 2007-2008, where overall the quality of teaching in primary schools in Wales is reported to be Grade 2 or better in 83% of lessons. However, the percentage of teaching with outstanding features is higher than the national average of 16%. These figures are a significant improvement on the percentages reported at the last inspection.
22. Outstanding features include effective questioning and clear explanations, exciting and interesting tasks, teachers intervening very effectively in the learning, challenging pupils' thinking and setting high expectations.
23. Many practitioners show good subject knowledge and familiarity with recent initiatives and curriculum developments, but a minority have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices of the Foundation phase and lack confidence in implementing it.
24. Practitioners promote equal opportunities and treat all pupils equally, irrespective of race, gender or disability.

25. Assessment procedures are good. Statutory requirements for assessing and reporting are fully met. Throughout the school an appropriate range of approaches is used to make judgements about pupils' attainment.
26. Pupils' understanding of the newly introduced self-assessment systems is developing well. In most classes there is good oral feedback. However, a minority of teachers do not offer clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve.
27. A recent development of the assessment process is pupil participation in setting their own targets which is beginning to be effective in encouraging them to strive for improvement. However, it is not yet fully developed. Reports to parents are informative and cover all areas of the curriculum.
28. The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. For both children under five and KS1, it fulfils statutory requirements, and is accessible to the full range of learners.
29. Curriculum planning is an outstanding feature. Collaboration between curriculum leaders is very effective, and based on the common aim that all learning should be meaningful. Interesting and challenging activities meet learners' aspirations very well and extend their understanding of their community and the wider world.
30. Planning for using the outside classrooms and sensory garden is outstanding. Experiential learning is particularly well promoted in these areas.
31. The quality of whole-school planning for the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is consistently good. In KS1 this provision is often outstanding. Planning for bilingualism is also good; vocabulary and phrases introduced relate well to pupils' current curriculum experiences. The focus in planning on problem solving, thinking and creative skills is good and often outstanding in the classrooms for older learners.
32. Welsh culture is actively promoted in all areas of learning and subjects. The school has a strong Welsh ethos. The curriculum also provides many opportunities to enhance an understanding of the diversity of the world and enhances their awareness of global citizenship.
33. Provision for spiritual development is an outstanding feature. In the classes for older learners a sense of awe and wonder is present. Collective worship fulfils statutory requirements; simple messages conveyed often relate appropriately to classroom learning.
34. Provision for moral and social development is good with outstanding features. Opportunities to extend social skills and to enable pupils to understand the differences between right and wrong are consistently focused in planning. Personal and social education (PSE) integrates all learning experiences and ensures that pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem.

35. The focus on sustainable development is an outstanding feature. Pupils receive excellent opportunities to become familiar with conservational issues relating to their locality and the wider world and they are encouraged to understand the importance of health-related issues. The school's initiatives are very effective in promoting life-long learning and contribute significantly to community regeneration.
36. Partnership with parents and carers is good with outstanding features. The school works very successfully in partnership with them on matters concerning the progress and well-being of their children.
37. The school has very close links with the community: it makes excellent use of local facilities and is involved regularly in community events. It also has good links with industry.
38. The school plans and manages care arrangements in an outstanding way. It has extremely well organised induction arrangements for children entering the school and successful transition arrangements to KS2.
39. The quality of provision for pupils with SEN is good. Practitioners are very astute at recognising children with difficulties in order to diagnose individual learning needs at an early stage. All pupils with SEN are well integrated into the life and work of the school. Specific provision ensures that the learning needs of more able pupils are met successfully.
40. The school provides a good level of support for pupils whose behaviour impedes their own progress and that of others. Pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality are very carefully monitored. The school successfully secures equal treatment of pupils with physical or sensory disabilities and recognises and actively promotes respect for diversity particularly well

Leadership and management

41. Leadership successfully provides clear direction through aims and values that are extremely well reflected in the life and work of the school. The head teacher confidently articulates her vision for the school. The management of changes related to integrating Robertstown Nursery into the school have been exceptionally well managed. Members of staff have a clear understanding of their roles.
42. Target setting is an integral part of the school's development, and all staff are involved in the process. The school development plan (SDP) clearly outlines a range of challenging and realistic targets for school improvement. Teachers benefit from attending courses, and information is disseminated effectively.
43. Overall an effective culture of self-evaluation has been established. Systems and strategies are supported by a range of documentation, which provides good guidelines for rigorous and robust self-evaluation.

44. The school has effective and systematic monitoring systems. However, because of the unavoidable absence of the headteacher earlier in the year, the monitoring programme has not been followed.
45. Progress since the last inspection has been good. A strategic vision and development plan was drawn up following the last inspection report in 2003. This determined the way forward and helped build a shared understanding of the context in which the school expected to operate and the direction it needed to take. This plan was renewed and evaluated at regular intervals.
46. Members of the governing body (GB) have a good awareness of the self-evaluation process. However, their part in the process is not fully developed. Many are newly co-opted and are developing in their understanding of the process, while more established members play an active role in the school's strategies to assess its own performance.
47. The school consults with parents and carers through a range of questionnaires. The school council has a clear role in the self-evaluation process and members make suggestions and decisions on a range of issues.
48. At the time of the inspection there were sufficient qualified and experienced staff, who possess a range of experience and expertise to enable all aspects of the curriculum to be fully developed. Adults are effectively deployed. Teachers use their planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time effectively, and PPA cover is well targeted.
49. Considerable staff development has been undertaken to support the implementation of the Foundation Phase. However, some support staff have yet to complete sufficient training to ensure that learning opportunities created for a minority of small groups of pupils are fully exploited.
50. Although the building is old, recent extensions and refurbishments have improved the accommodation significantly and good use is made of the accommodation. However, since the arrival of Robertstown Nursery, space is more limited.
51. All classrooms have access to the outside with the classes for younger children having access to a very effective soft play area. Outside areas include a sensory and gravel garden; these are outstanding features.
52. The school's resources are of a very high quality. They are carefully monitored by subject leaders who identify priorities for purchase in line with targets set in the SDP.
53. The GB fulfils its legal and statutory requirements, and meets its responsibilities in reviewing expenditure well. Overall financial implications are clearly thought through and the school gives good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to move the school forward the staff and GB need to:

- R1 continue to implement the monitoring of attendance in order to improve current percentages;
- R2 provide further opportunities for all adults working in classes to develop their confidence and effectiveness in teaching within the Foundation Phase;
- R3 further develop assessment strategies including self-assessment by pupils; and
- R4 further develop the school's self-evaluation systems by re-establishing the monitoring of standards, quality of teaching and provision and encourage all members of the GB to become active participants in the self-evaluation process.

Recommendations 1,2,3 are identified as priorities in the current school development plan (SDP).

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

54. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
55. In NC assessments at the end of KS1, pupils' attainment is consistently above local and national percentages. In 2008 all pupils achieved a Level 2 in English, mathematics, science and the CS1. The percentages of pupils who achieved the higher Level 3 in the oracy and reading elements of English and in science were above both local and national percentages; in writing and mathematics they were below. Girls slightly outperform boys especially in writing.
56. When compared with schools who had the same number of free school meals, results in 2006 and 2007 were consistently in the upper fifty per cent. When placed in a group who have a higher number of pupils claiming free school meals in 2008, results were in the upper quarter in mathematics, science and the CS1, while in English they were between the middle and upper quarter of schools.
57. The overall quality of educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes.
58. Children often have poor speaking, listening, personal and social skills on entry to school. Assessments during their first year, however, indicate that these skills are greatly improved. Evidence suggests that pupils increase their understanding well as they move up the school.
59. The majority of learners achieve their potential. Those with SEN often exceed the targets set for them when their attainment is assessed at the end of the key stage. Most succeed well regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background. At the end of KS1 pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
60. Learners achieve consistently good levels in key skills. Standards are especially good in KS1 where many pupils often make very good progress in literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT. Bilingual competence is good overall; in the Y1 and Y2 class pupils make very good progress in learning Welsh.
61. Learners respond well when practitioners share learning objectives with them, and at the end of sessions demonstrate that they have achieved new knowledge and understanding. They are aware of how they are progressing but are not always secure in the knowledge of what they need to do to improve.

62. Pupils make good progress in the development of their personal, social and learning skills.
63. Learners are motivated and work productively. Most make effective use of their time; they are eager to proceed with their tasks whether it is with or without support. Nearly all willingly share and cooperate when working in groups and the majority sustain good levels of concentration. Their capacity for working independently is good and has outstanding features in KS1.
64. The majority of pupils behave well and show respect for their peers and adults. Even the youngest children know what is expected of them; for example, they behave sensibly on a visit to the nearby supermarket. Older ones are good role models. Behaviour in the hall during collective worship is good; a small minority of younger children however, lack self-control and self-discipline.
65. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities and a well developed awareness of the diversity in society and in their own community.
66. At 91.03%, attendance in the three terms prior to the inspection was below the national percentages, as well as the LA and similar schools. Absences during this period were caused by illness and inclement weather, but the overall percentage is adversely affected by an increasing number of family holidays during term time.
67. Pupils are very well prepared for effective participation in the workplace. They develop a good understanding of corporate responsibilities and understand the importance of working as a team, especially when working with disabled members of the community on garden projects.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

68. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
69. The quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
27%	41%	32%	0%	0%

70. These figures are below the national averages as published in HMCI's annual report for 2007-2008, where overall the quality of teaching in primary schools in Wales is reported to be Grade 2 or better in 83% of lessons. However, the percentage of teaching with outstanding features is higher than the national

average of 16%. These figures are a significant improvement on the percentages reported at the last inspection.

71. Where teaching was judged to be outstanding, features include:
- effective questioning and clear explanations;
 - exciting and interesting tasks;
 - very effective interventions in the learning;
 - teachers challenging pupils' thinking very well; and
 - high expectations of pupils' achievements.
72. Where teaching was judged to be good with no important shortcomings, good features include:
- a lively pace to lessons;
 - teachers setting suitable time limits for the completion of tasks;
 - teachers extending pupils' language; and
 - detailed planning with clear lesson objectives.
73. Where teaching was judged to have shortcomings, these include:
- a lack of challenge to stimulate pupils;
 - lack of firm class control and teachers not involving all pupils; and
 - insufficient knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices of the Foundation Phase.
74. Although a minority of practitioners lack confidence in implementing the Foundation Phase, many show good subject knowledge and familiarity with recent initiatives and curriculum developments.
75. Most practitioners plan effectively and communicate clear objectives to pupils. They organise their classes well to ensure that these objectives are best achieved by pupils, whether working alone, in pairs, in groups or as a whole class.
76. Relationships within the school are good, and the respect between practitioners and pupils has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to work. On the whole, practitioners use a wide range of methods that promote good standards of work and behaviour. They use appropriate resources for lessons, often in an imaginative way.
77. Practitioners promote equal opportunities and challenge stereotypical views well. They treat all pupils equally, irrespective of race, gender or disability.
78. There is good emphasis on developing pupils' English skills, and in meeting the needs of those with EAL. Bilingualism is promoted effectively in the majority of classes, and in the best examples adults are very successful in fostering pupils' use of both languages across the curriculum.

79. In general, the effectiveness of planning to meet pupils' needs, including those with SEN and more able pupils, is good. Groups and individual pupils are observed and assessed and changes made as necessary.
80. Assessment procedures are good. Statutory requirements for assessing and reporting are met fully.
81. Under-fives are assessed regularly in all seven areas of learning, and the baseline assessment is rigorously implemented. Assessment information is used effectively to monitor the all-round development of young children, and to plan appropriately for their needs.
82. Throughout the school an appropriate range of approaches is used to make judgements about pupils' attainment. These include daily observations and teacher assessments.
83. Portfolios of work, assessed using NC criteria, which have been developed in collaboration with other schools in the area, support the accuracy of teacher assessments effectively. Good use is made of data to set targets and to track the progress of individuals and cohorts of pupils over time.
84. Pupils' understanding of the newly introduced self-assessment systems is developing well. In most classes there is good oral feedback, resulting in pupils gaining an appropriate awareness of some of their strengths and weaknesses. Their work is marked regularly and, in general, teachers make positive comments on work. However, a minority of teachers do not offer clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve.
85. A recent development of the assessment process is pupil participation in setting their own targets in mathematics, literacy and personal and social education areas, and this is already beginning to be effective in encouraging them to strive for improvement. However it is not fully developed.
86. Parents state that they are happy with the school's open door policy that enables them to discuss their children's work informally. They also value the system of visiting the school formally on consultation evenings to discuss their children's progress. Reports to parents are informative, and cover all areas of the curriculum.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

87. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.

88. The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. For both children under five and KS1 it fulfils statutory requirements, and is accessible to the full range of learners.
89. Curriculum planning is an outstanding feature. Collaboration between curriculum leaders at all planning stages is very effective and based on the common aim that all learning should be meaningful.
90. Interesting and challenging activities meet learners' aspirations very well and extend their understanding of their community and the wider world. Displays are colourful and stimulating and are used well to extend curricular experiences.
91. The curriculum is based around a series of six whole-school themes. These successfully ensure effective continuity in knowledge, understanding and skills for both younger and older learners.
92. Curriculum policies, schemes and thematic maps ensure that all areas and subjects are given in-depth attention, with excellent links between subjects and areas of learning. Although themes are revisited during a pupil's life at the school, the focus and recording of skill development ensures progression across the four years.
93. Short-term weekly planning involves all the adults who work in classes. This aspect has outstanding features. Weekly reviews of previous provision are considered in detail when informing future planning. Focused tasks are clearly identified. Details ensure that all adults involved in the learning process are aware of their role in leading and supporting activities.
94. Planning for using the outside classrooms and sensory garden is outstanding. Experiential learning is particularly well promoted in these areas.
95. The quality of whole-school planning for the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is consistently good. In KS1 this provision is often outstanding. Strategies such as 'Talking Partners' are used well to promote oracy. The use of a range of texts, including extracts giving information, promotes reading and writing successfully. The focus in short-term planning on numeracy and the use of ICT is consistently good.
96. Planning for bilingualism is also good; vocabulary and phrases introduced relate well to pupils' current curriculum experiences.
97. The focus in planning on problem solving, thinking and creative skills is good and often outstanding in the classrooms for older learners. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in solitary work and play, or collaborate in pairs and groups.
98. Welsh culture is actively promoted in all areas of learning and subjects. This integrates meaningfully into planning. For example a visit to Swansea leads to a study of Cedric Morris, an artist linked with the city. Pupils are introduced to a

wide repertoire of traditional and contemporary Welsh songs. The school has a strong Welsh ethos.

99. The curriculum also provides many opportunities to enhance an understanding of the diversity of the world. Barnaby Bear accompanies pupils and staff on holiday; information and photographs brought back promote learners' understanding of different lifestyles and customs. A study of rainforests introduces pupils to significant different areas in the world, while collecting for good causes enhances their awareness of global citizenship.
100. Visits enhance curricular provision in an outstanding manner; they are purposeful and contribute very effectively to the themes studied. Visitors to school include many adults from the community. Musical specialists enrich learners' experiences.
101. Provision for spiritual development is an outstanding feature. In the classes for older learners a sense of awe and wonder is present. Collective worship fulfils statutory requirements; simple messages conveyed often relate appropriately to classroom learning. These occasions allow time for reflection and develop a good understanding of Bible stories and the need to care for the environment.
102. Provision for moral and social development is good with outstanding features. Opportunities to extend social skills by taking on responsibilities and collaborating are consistently focused in planning. Strategies, such as class behaviour contracts, provide encouragement and opportunities for pupils to recognise the differences between right and wrong. The PSE programme, taught formally in weekly sessions, integrates all learning experiences.
103. The focus on sustainable development is an outstanding feature. Pupils receive excellent opportunities to become familiar with conservation issues relating to their locality and the wider world. An award gained recently for the Yellow Woods Challenge competition complements the success in gaining the Eco flag award. The School Council and Energy Police are very pro-active in matters of sustainable development and ensure that no energy is wasted. Daily health snacks are provided and pupils are encouraged to understand the importance of health-related issues.
104. Opportunities are provided to develop an awareness of entrepreneurial skills through classroom role-play. Learners begin to understand the concept of selling for a profit.
105. The school's initiatives, such as healthy living, sustainability and their confidence in using ICT, are very effective in promoting life-long learning. Pupils are encouraged to extend these activities at home; this contributes significantly to community regeneration.
106. Partnership with parents and carers is good with outstanding features. The Friends of the School Association is active and organises successful fundraising and social events. Members provide generous financial support to

purchase valuable resources, such as outdoor play equipment and plants and materials for the sensory garden.

107. A small number of adults, including governors, provide valuable support in class, on visits and with themes such as Wonderful World of Books, as well as with practical activities. This involvement is highly valued by the school and has a very positive effect on pupils' learning.
108. The school has very close links with the community. It makes excellent use of local facilities and is involved regularly in community events. A recently created web-site informs both parents and community of important activities and aspects of school life.
109. There are good links with the local museum and library and pupils regularly participate in workshops. Pupils' awareness of the wider community is raised through fundraising events, such as 'Seeds for Africa' and 'Adopt a Leopard' and through Velindre Chicks and McMillan coffee morning. Pupils are actively encouraged to attend events such as the Remembrance Day service in the town.
110. The school has very close links with the adjoining junior school, surrounding schools and colleges of further education. It is in partnership with an initial teacher training university and provides very valuable training and work experience for student teachers, secondary school and child care students. There are well established transition arrangements for pupils moving from KS1 to KS2. Schools are involved in initiatives such as Critical Skills Programme and Physical Education and School Sports (PESS) project. Collective worship and other celebrations, such as Harvest, the annual Eisteddfod and summer fairs are open to invited members of the community and are very well attended.
111. The school has good links with industry. It has a positive attitude to teacher placements in industry and well established links with the Education Business Partnership (EBP). As a result all staff have been involved in very good quality workshops that enhance their teaching and management skills and promote their professional development. Local firms often supply resources for the school.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

112. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
113. The school plans and manages care arrangements in an outstanding way, and makes effective use of a wide range of external services to support pupils. Good relationships between pupils and staff reflect the warm and caring ethos of the school.

114. The school works very successfully in partnership with parents on matters concerning the well being of their children. Parents expressed positive views in the pre-inspection meeting and questionnaires on the care their children receive. They praise the open door policy which allows them to discuss day-to-day problems. They are happy that their concerns are addressed promptly and sensitively. Through attending various workshops at the school, many parents feel confident in helping their children, particularly when learning is extended through homework.
115. The school has extremely well organised induction arrangements for children entering the school. Outstanding features include a coffee evening for parents, a parent and toddler group for pre-nursery children, a 'starting school' booklet, and very effective arrangements for parents to spend time with their child in the nursery setting. Learners transferring from other schools are sensitively paired with a 'buddy' for support, and circle time is used most effectively in classes to develop relationships. Visits to the junior school and parents' meetings are key features in the successful transition arrangements to KS2.
116. The quality of personal support and guidance is high, and the promotion of values such as tolerance, respect and helping others is evident in the school. A highly effective PSE programme ensures that pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem. Circle time is one example of the excellent ways in which the school provides opportunities to discuss relevant issues and problems, and is an integral part of the school day.
117. The school council is also a valuable means by which pupils can air their views. Council members have a proactive role in several aspects of school life, and pupils make excellent progress in their appreciation of global and local citizenship.
118. Pupils benefit greatly from the input of professionals such as the school nurse, health visitors and the educational psychologist.
119. Many well-documented procedures have been formulated and are reviewed regularly by all staff and the GB to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the school. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly, and the school encourages healthy living through the daily breakfast club, the promotion of healthy snacks, the Safe Route to School venture and the after-school exercise club.
120. There is an appropriate policy for child protection, with two nominated child protection officers, and a designated governor who has a good understanding of child protection issues. All members of staff have undertaken appropriate training and are aware of their responsibilities.
121. The quality of provision for pupils with SEN is good. Practitioners are very astute at recognising children with difficulties in order to diagnose individual learning needs at an early stage and prompt action is taken to support these pupils. Individual education plans (IEPs) provide appropriate and achievable

targets that are reviewed regularly; arrangements to inform and involve parents are good.

122. Support arrangements are exceptionally good, and include appropriate use of Learning Support Assistants (LSA)s within classes. IEP targets are used well as a focus during lessons.
123. KS1 pupils benefit from valuable withdrawal sessions where their individual needs are addressed. Programmes, such as Catch Up, Popat and Spotlight are undertaken effectively in withdrawal groups for pupils in need of extra help with oracy, literacy and numeracy. All pupils with SEN are well integrated into the life and work of the school.
124. Specific provision ensures that the learning needs of more able pupils are met successfully through extending learning opportunities, in line with the particular needs of individuals.
125. The school provides a good level of support for pupils whose behaviour impedes their own progress and that of others, for example, through the very effective rewards and sanctions system. Advice and guidance provided by the behaviour support service are much appreciated by the school.
126. The diversity of children's backgrounds is recognised effectively in many ways, including supporting the development of EAL and acknowledging children's religious differences.
127. The school's policies and practices take good account of the need to be aware of stereotyping activities, and to promote equality irrespective of race, gender or disability. The range of visitors to school, for example a visit by a female police officer, provides good opportunities to question gender roles.
128. The school successfully secures equal treatment of pupils with physical or sensory disabilities, and its approach in making reasonable adjustments to ensure the inclusion of pupils with disabilities is extremely good. The GB meets its statutory obligations with regard to disability access, and has an appropriate disability equality scheme.
129. Good race relations are promoted very effectively through the use of stories, circle time and visitors, as well as in school assemblies and collective worship. The school is proactive in combating all forms of discrimination, and takes effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour.
130. The school recognises and actively promotes respect for diversity particularly well. It fosters greater understanding particularly well through various curricular areas, and through collective worship, when effective use is made of dolls representing different cultures and traditions.
131. Policies and procedures to monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality, behaviour and performance are very good.

132. Arrangements to encourage pupils to behave well are extremely effective. Teachers apply policies for behaviour management consistently and all adults in the school are very good role models. Action is taken to support pupils who may experience behavioural difficulties.
133. The school council helps to evaluate behaviour and members take on roles as 'bus stop buddies' to ensure that no one is friendless at break times and lunch time.
134. The school operates a first-day response to absence system and has recently introduced a late book to good effect. The Breakfast Club and weekly Best Class award has improved attendance and punctuality for a few pupils. Appropriate targets are set
135. The school works very closely with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who undertakes initiatives such as "late at the gate". Assemblies reinforce the need for regular punctual attendance, and an incentive scheme is particularly effective. The EWO and other agencies work well with the very few families that give concern, both in terms of attendance and family welfare.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.

136. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
137. Leadership successfully provides clear direction through aims and values that are extremely well reflected in the life and work of the school.
138. The head teacher confidently articulates her vision for the school. She leads a dedicated staff who work effectively as a team and share common goals. She is supported most effectively by the Foundation Phase and KS1 team leaders.
139. Members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) play a vital role in strategic management, and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, although at the time of the inspection one team leader and the deputy head teacher were absent.
140. The management of changes related to integrating Robertstown Nursery into the school have been exceptionally well managed.
141. The good quality of leadership provided by the head teacher and the GB are key factors in bringing about good standards of pupil achievement and school improvement. High standards are promoted through shared values about learning, behaviour and relationships by all participants.

142. All partners reflect critically upon current practice, identify areas for improvement and work closely with staff to bring about changes. Members of staff have a clear understanding of their roles. Job descriptions define their responsibilities clearly.
143. The school takes excellent account of local and national priorities, such as the implementation of the Foundation Phase, the ECO school award, Healthy Schools Initiative, the physical education and school sports (PESS) project and the development of the Critical Skills Programme. These are fully integrated into the school's development programme. The school's current assessment for the British Educational Communications Technology Award (BECTA) is an example of its commitment to such priorities.
144. The school benefits from being an active member of the Aberdare schools' cluster and works successfully with its partners to promote high educational values.
145. Target setting is an integral part of the school's development, and all staff are involved in the process. The SDP clearly outlines a range of challenging and realistic targets for school improvement, and senior staff communicate their expectations effectively to those they manage. In the Foundation Phase, baseline information is used well for target setting for individuals and groups, and to identify areas for development in the SDP. End of key stage data is analysed carefully and is used appropriately to inform targets in the SDP.
146. Performance management processes are thorough and involve both teaching and support staff. All staff have annual targets for improvement linked to the SDP and their own professional needs. Teachers benefit from attending courses, and information is disseminated effectively.
147. Members of the support team are encouraged to pursue courses leading to higher qualifications. The positive impact of staff development is apparent in the quality of provision and in the standards achieved by pupils. In line with national guidelines, the school has successfully restructured teachers' responsibilities.
148. Although there are many new governors, the GB participates fully in developing the strategic direction of the school. They conscientiously review all school data, including attendance figures and end of key stage results. They regularly monitor the quality of provision at the school through a range of activities, such as visiting the school, receiving reports from various curricular leaders, reviewing documentation, and the annual performance review by the link advisor. The GB fulfils its legal and statutory requirements, and meets its responsibilities well.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.

149. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
150. The team agreed with the judgements made by the school in all seven key questions. The self-evaluation report provided for the inspection team showed that the school had a realistic and clear view of its development.
151. Overall an effective culture of self-evaluation has been established. Systems and strategies are supported by a range of documentation, which provides good guidelines for rigorous and robust self-evaluation.
152. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards in Welsh and ICT have improved significantly. Significant progress has also been made in the opportunities provided to develop key skills across the curriculum. In this inspection standards in key skills were good overall and often very good in KS1. The organisation of classes has also improved considerably. Although a few practitioners lack confidence in the philosophy and practices of the Foundation Phase, the percentage of good and outstanding teaching has also improved as has the effectiveness of group and play activities guided by adult intervention.
153. A strategic vision and development plan were drawn up following the last inspection report in 2003, which determined the way forward and helped build a shared understanding of the context in which the school expected to operate and the direction it needed to take. This document highlighted the school's achievements since 1998 and made good use of two inspection reports, standardised data and ongoing monitoring. Recurring themes identified standards, curriculum and resource issues. The strategic plan was renewed and evaluated at regular intervals.
154. Consecutive SDPs have been instrumental in moving the school forward and have focused clearly on learning skills and learning outcomes, extending teaching and assessment practices, improving aspects of the curriculum, ensuring a good ethos to support standards and a high quality of leadership and management.
155. The current SDP was formulated in consultation with staff and GB. It clearly identified responsibilities, timescales and resource implications and took full consideration of the review of the SDP from the previous year.
156. The school has effective and systematic monitoring systems in place. Leaders and managers are aware of performances in their areas of responsibility through evaluating data, scrutiny of data, listening to learners, supporting planning and monitoring teaching in classrooms.

157. However, because of the unavoidable absence of the headteacher earlier in the year the monitoring programme has not been followed. Subject leaders have in the early part of the summer term completed subject action plans to address this shortcoming, in order to move areas of learning and subjects forward.
158. The school analyses its performance data in detail in order to identify trends over time. This, in addition to the findings of subject leaders, feeds into the SDP. Staff meetings and weekly SMT meetings ensure that all adults who work at the school play a full part in the self-evaluation process.
159. Members of the GB have a good awareness of the self-evaluation process. However, their part in the self-evaluation process is not fully developed. Many are newly co-opted and are developing their understanding of the process, while more established members play an active role in the school's strategies to assess its own performance. Many know the school well and discuss its priorities for development knowledgeably.
160. The school consults with parents and carers through a range of questionnaires. They gave examples in the pre-inspection meeting of how their suggestions are acted upon. The school council has a clear role in the self-evaluation process and makes suggestions and decisions on a range of issues.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.

161. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
162. At the time of the inspection there were sufficient qualified and experienced staff, who possess a range of experience and expertise to enable all aspects of the curriculum to be fully developed.
163. Adults are effectively deployed. Each teacher works with at least one support staff each day and all support staff are fully involved in planning, teaching and recording pupils' progress. However, because of the staggered entry of nursery children it is difficult at times to ensure the appropriate ratio of staff to children in the nursery class, especially in the summer term.
164. Considerable staff development has been undertaken to support the implementation of the Foundation Phase. However, some support staff have yet to complete sufficient training to ensure that learning opportunities created for a minority of small groups of pupils are fully exploited.
165. Teachers use their planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time effectively, and PPA cover is well targeted.

166. The school clerk, cleaners and caretaker all take a pride in the school and contribute significantly to its day to day running and the quality of its environment.
167. Although the building is old, recent extensions and refurbishments have improved the accommodation significantly. A new dining hall and kitchen which are shared with the Junior School, have enabled full use of the hall at all times and enabled meals to be cooked on site. This has also provided appropriate space for breakfast club, activities during the day and after-school provision.
168. Rooms are of adequate size for children under five years of age. These have been converted into an unit which allows rooms to be used by both nursery and reception children. Classrooms for Y1 and Y2 are light and airy. All classrooms have access to the outside, with the classes for younger children having access to a very effective soft play area.
169. Good use is made of the accommodation. However, since the arrival of Robertstown Nursery, space is more limited, but there is no evidence that this has had a detrimental effect on provision or standards at the school. However, it has impacted on the school's library and quiet reading room provision as well as the space available for storing resources.
170. Recent refurbishments have ensured access for disabled learners and include toilet facilities and a ramp leading to the canteen. The building is safe and secure.
171. Outside areas include a sensory and gravel garden. These are outstanding features, which are used regularly to provide opportunities to discover and work with natural materials and to explore and develop a range of physical skills. Play areas, however, are somewhat restricted for the number of pupils on role.
172. Recent refurbishments have ensured access for disabled learners and include toilet facilities and a ramp leading to the canteen. The building is safe and secure.
173. The school's resources are of a very high quality. They are shared well between classrooms and stored sensibly. ICT resources are evident throughout the school and are used confidently by staff and pupils
174. Resources are carefully monitored by subject leaders, who identify priorities for purchase in line with targets set in the SDP. The GB reviews this expenditure and receives regular progress reports from subject leaders on the impact of purchases on teaching and learning. Overall financial implications are clearly thought through and the school gives good value for money.

School's response to the inspection

175. The Governing Body, staff and children of Comin Infants School would like to thank the inspection team for the positive and courteous way they conducted the inspection.
176. We are delighted that the team determined that our school provides a good quality education within a supportive and stimulating environment. We are especially pleased that the inspection team have judged that our pupils achieve consistently good levels in key skills with Y1 and Y2 pupils making very good progress in learning Welsh and the school having a strong Welsh ethos.
177. The team's judgements that planning for using the outside classrooms and sensory garden, children's spiritual development, and our partnership with parents and carers are outstanding features of our school are very pleasing. In addition, we are proud of the fact that we are judged to manage care arrangements in an outstanding way and successfully meet the learning needs of more able pupils.
178. We now feel that such a positive and fair process of evaluating the education we provide has given us an excellent base on which to further develop the school. The team's agreement with all of our self-evaluation judgements provides us with greater confidence in our own judgements as does the fact that three of the four inspection recommendations are currently priorities in our SDP.
179. Our Post Inspection Action Plan will address the recommendations of the inspection team in full and will aim to build on our current achievements through the continuation of the good progress we have made since the last inspection.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Comin Infants School
School type	Infant including Foundation Phase
Age-range of pupils	3-7 years of age
Address of school	Hirwaun Road, Trecynon, Aberdare
Postcode	CF44 8LU
Telephone number	01685 874026

Headteacher	Mrs Phillipa Thomas
Date of appointment	September 1997
Chair of governors	Mrs Moira Davies
Registered inspector	Mrs Eleri Betts
Dates of inspection	June 15th-17 th 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	64	31	38	41	-	-	-	-	174

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	7	-	7

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	1:27
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	1.8.5
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	27.5
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1.1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of school
Summer 2008	92.7%	91.2%	91.0%
Autumn 2008	92.0%	92.3%	92.3%
Spring 2009	82.5%	89.4%	89.8%

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	27.5%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 1:

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results 2008			Number of pupils in Y2:					25
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	
English:	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	12	64	24	
		National	0.2	3.5	13.8	63.0	19.4	
En: speaking and listening	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	8	64	28	
		National	0.2	2.4	10.7	62.8	23.8	
En: reading	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	12	48	40	
		National	0.2	4.1	14.9	55.2	25.5	
En: writing	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	12	80	8	
		National	0.2	4.8	16	67.8	23.8	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	92	8	
		National	0.2	2.0	10.9	65.2	21.6	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	56	44	
		National	0.2	1.6	8.5	66.3	23.4	

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school	88%	In Wales	80%

D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Four inspectors spent the equivalent of seven inspector days in the school. The school's nominee was also part of the team. There was no peer assessor. All members met as a team before the inspection.

These inspectors visited and observed:

- twenty two lessons or part lessons;
- registrations 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;
- teachers, support and administrative staff; and
- the school council and representatives of organisations associated with the school.

The team also considered;

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- eleven responses to a parents' questionnaire of which 90% of answers 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 staff and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mrs Eleri Betts Registered Inspector	Context, Summary Report, Recommendations, Key Questions 1/3/6,
Mrs Caterina Lewis Lay Inspector	Contributions to Key Questions 1/3/4/7
Mrs Zohrah Evans Team Inspector	Key Questions 2/4/5
Mr Graham Haines Team Inspector	Key Question 7
Mrs Lynne Davies Nominee/ Senior Teacher	Attending meetings and providing information.

Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, headteacher, members of staff and pupils for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the inspection.

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