

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

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

School Number: 6742107

Date of Inspection: 17 November 2008

by

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Comin Junior 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 Junior School took place between 17/11/08 and 19/11/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Jeffrey John Beecher 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 Junior School is a community school situated in Trecynon, close to the town of Aberdare. The intake is mainly from Trecynon and the Gadlys. The school describes the local area as neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. Pupils attending the school come from mixed backgrounds, which are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged.
2. The school provides education for pupils aged seven to eleven. The number on roll has dropped significantly since the school was last inspected in 2002. At the time of the inspection there are 164 pupils on roll. 60 pupils (35 per cent) are identified as having additional learning needs; this is well above the Welsh average. No pupil has a statement for special educational needs. At the time of the inspection 17.5 percent of pupils were claiming free school meals, which is close to the Welsh average. No pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. There are approximately 5 per cent of pupils from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and, at present, there are no pupils "looked after" by the local authority. No pupil was excluded in the previous year.
3. There are seven teachers including the head teacher and one part time. Since the previous inspection in December 2002 one new class teacher has been appointed. The school has obtained a renewal of the Basic Skill Quality Mark for the second time.

The school's priorities and targets

4. The school's mission states that it should be a happy welcoming community where everyone is encouraged to develop their full potential within a caring atmosphere.
5. The school aims to:
 - Create a happy, interesting and stimulating environment.
 - Have high expectations of all pupils, involving them in setting targets for personal achievement.
 - Develop responsibility and self discipline in all pupils.
 - Establish a school of which everyone is proud and within which everyone can work together.
 - Foster and develop good relationships with the local community.
6. The school's major priorities and targets for 2008-2009 are identified in the school development plan:
 - To improve pupils' attainments in English and Maths.
 - To enhance the integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) across the curriculum.
 - To enhance the role of the school in serving the community.
 - To enhance the use of Welsh in the everyday life of the school.
 - To enhance the quality of teaching learning and assessment.
 - To ensure accommodation provides a suitable, safe environment for teaching and learning.

Summary

7. Comin Junior school is a caring, friendly school which develops pupils' personal and social skills well. The overall quality of care, support and guidance it provides for pupils is good. However, there are important shortcomings in aspects of strategic leadership and management and in the self-evaluation arrangements.
8. Inspection findings show a mismatch between the standards of attainment indicated in the school's National Curriculum teachers' assessment results and those in pupils' work observed during the lessons seen and in their work over time. Pupils' good levels of ability, as indicated by standardised assessments, are not fully reflected in the progress and achievement of pupils across their studies.
9. The inspection team awarded a lower grade than the school in its self-evaluation report in all but one of the key questions. The majority of the evidence gathered in the inspection did not match the grades awarded by the school.
10. In accordance with the Education Act 2005, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that this school is in need of significant improvement.

Table of grades awarded

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

11. Overall, regardless of their age, ethnicity or background, most pupils in Comin Junior School make steady progress, while those with additional learning needs, including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress and achieve well over time.
12. The results of National Curriculum teacher assessments for 2008 were above national figures in English, mathematics and science and, in comparison with similar schools, they were in the top fifty per cent of schools. Over time and since the last inspection the end of key stage results generally show a trend of steady improvement in all core subjects.

13. However, the first-hand evidence of inspection, including the scrutiny of pupils' current and previous work from the last academic year, confirms widely variable progress across the key stage and standards of attainment that do not match these assessments.
14. There are inconsistencies across the school in pupils' progress and standards in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT). In *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* pupils' standards and progress have good features that outweigh shortcomings. Standards and progress in pupils' bilingual skills have important shortcomings. By the end of key stage 2 they have a limited vocabulary and a narrow range of questions which they can answer.
15. Over the key stage most pupils make good progress with no important shortcomings in the key skills of speaking and reading. Their problem-solving, creative, mathematical and information and communications technology skills have good features that outweigh shortcomings.
16. Most pupils listen attentively, and the more able show increasing ability to listen critically; however, many show a limited concentration span and frequent inability to focus, and this is most evident when the quality of teaching has important shortcomings.
17. Pupils can speak confidently about their learning experiences, and many of the more able offer responses that are suitably extended. Overall they respond well to questioning and articulate their thoughts clearly and confidently.
18. Over the key stage most pupils read well, accurately and with good expression, and they demonstrate a wide use of reading skills, on both a group and individual basis. This results in the accurate understanding and reading of text and the ability to gather information from books and other material. All pupils receiving additional support with their reading make good progress.
19. Pupils' writing shows some good progress but, due to the narrow range of opportunities presented to the pupils, evidence of writing across the curriculum for different audiences and purposes is limited and pupils' standards and progress have shortcomings.
20. Opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum are limited and only within a narrow range of contexts; this limits the progress pupils make. In general, pupils make some good use of Information Communication Technology to support their learning, although skills are not consistently applied in all areas of the curriculum and, as a result, pupils' progress is held back. More recently, opportunities for groups of more-able pupils to be appropriately challenged in this area have been provided and this is having a positive impact on their progress.

21. Pupils' personal, social, moral and learning skills are good. Their attitudes to learning, the interest they show in their work and their ability to concentrate are generally good. Despite some boisterousness observed in class, the standard of behaviour is generally good. All pupils show courtesy and respect towards the staff, visitors and each other.
22. Recent initiatives to involve pupils in assessing and evaluating their own and each others work, is developing well in some classes. However, the practice is inconsistent across the school. As a result, not all pupils know how to improve their learning.
23. Attendance averaged 92.8 per cent for the three terms prior to the inspection. This is an improvement from the previous inspection but is slightly below the all-Wales average.

The quality of education and training

Grades for teaching

24. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
5%	52%	33%	10%	0%

25. These figures represent a decline since the last inspection in 2002. They are below the national picture published in HMCI's Annual Report for 2006-07.
26. Good features in lessons include: tasks that are interesting and challenging; clear discussions with pupils centred around the learning objective and success criteria of the lesson; good planning and preparation: adults having high expectations of pupils' behaviour; and teachers establishing effective partnerships with Learning Support Assistants in order to support pupils' learning.
27. Where there are shortcomings, lesson objectives are unclear and tasks insufficiently challenging and there is a mismatch of work planned to meet the pupils' ability. Where there are important shortcomings, lessons do not develop at an appropriate pace and insufficient attention is given to continuity and progression in the skills related to individual subjects. There is an also an over emphasis on teacher input and strategies to manage the behaviour of some pupils are not consistently implemented.
28. There are shortcomings in the rigour of assessment and its use in improving learning and achievement. Too great an emphasis is placed on the use of standardised tests when assessing pupils' achievements. The accuracy of assessment is inconsistent because of the over reliance on using this data to determine end of key stage assessments.

29. The quality and content of written reports to parents are not always in line with statutory requirements.
30. The curriculum provided by the school is accessible to all pupils. The learning experiences provided in nearly all classes meet the needs of most learners, but do not consistently offer sufficient challenge for more-able pupils. The school successfully enriches pupils' learning experiences with a good range of out-of-hours activities. Education visits linked to the topics pupils study successfully broaden experiences. Good links are fostered with parents and the community.
31. The school promotes pupils' moral and social development well, and pupils are encouraged to develop a clear sense of what is right and wrong and to support each other throughout the day. Less emphasis is placed on pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
32. Arrangements to develop pupils' key skills are not consistently planned throughout the school. There are shortcomings in important areas in the provision to promote bilingual skills.
33. The pastoral care and well being that pupils receive from adults in lessons and on a day-to-day basis are good. Due attention is given, in the main, to pupils' safety and welfare. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who require additional support is good, with some very good features, and fulfils the requirements of the Special Needs Code of Practice.

Leadership and management

34. Whilst there are some good features, there are important shortcomings in the strategic leadership and management of the school.
35. The school has a set of specific aims that are focused on pupils' needs. However, there is a lack of shared vision between leaders and managers in how these aims promote and sustain improvements on a day-to-day basis. Individuals work hard to give direction to new initiatives and projects, but these are not translated into a common and consistent approach and, as a result, they are not effective or sustainable. This is an important shortcoming.
36. Although curriculum co-ordinators have had some opportunities to monitor their subjects, the practice lacks consistency and the monitoring of standards and quality of provision is not sufficiently developed. Co-ordinators have not developed an analytical and critical approach to self-evaluation and strategic planning.
37. The quality of the self-evaluation report is reduced by the mismatch between first-hand inspection evidence and the school's judgements. Although leadership has identified some important areas for improvement in its self-evaluation report there is little evidence to show the effective impact of leadership in improving quality and standards over time. This is an important shortcoming.

38. There is limited evidence to indicate how actions taken have resulted in measurable improvements since the previous inspection. Although the school sets annual targets in the school development plan, there is little evidence of the success of these initiatives in recent years. This is an important shortcoming. There has been insufficient progress since the last inspection. Shortcomings still exist in relation to such areas as standards in key skills, assessment, monitoring and evaluation and the role of curriculum co-ordinators.
39. The school development plan sets appropriate targets for the year. However, planning is not clearly linked to an evaluation of progress towards previous goals, first-hand evidence of the impact of initiatives is limited and there is little indication of a whole-school approach; these are important shortcomings.
40. The arrangements for teachers' performance management are in line with requirements. However, the evaluation of the impact of professional development and its effect on improving standards are underdeveloped.
41. The governing body is very supportive of the school. Governors meet regularly and appropriate committees are in place. However, governors are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the quality of provision and their contributions to school self-evaluation arrangements are underdeveloped; these are important shortcomings. They do not discharge all their statutory responsibilities in relation to the provision of information for parents.
42. There are sufficient qualified and experienced teachers and support assistants for the numbers on roll. The school secretary makes a very significant contribution to school administration and helps to ensure that day-to-day routines run smoothly.
43. Arrangements to review the use of resources and their impact on pupils' learning are inconsistent. Members of staff identify resource needs annually, but there is little evidence to show how purchases are prioritised or phased over time.
44. Generally, the school makes good use of its resources, but there are shortcomings, for example, in non-fiction books to promote pupils' reference skills, ICT equipment and the use of the outside grounds.
45. Overall the school provides sound value for money. Arrangements to review the use of resources are informal. The governing body ensures value for money in purchases and contracts, but the school has yet to demonstrate good value for money in relation to pupils' overall achievements and the targets set in the School Development Plan in recent years.

Recommendations

46. In order to improve the school, the head teacher, governors and members of staff need to:
- R1 Improve strategic leadership and management to ensure clear, robust direction is provided in order to improve standards;
 - R2 Develop arrangements for self-evaluation that are comprehensive, systematic and based on first-hand evidence and ensure these are closely linked to the school's key priorities for future development;
 - R3 Ensure that the development of pupils' key skills is consistently and progressively planned for throughout the school in order to raise pupils' achievement, including their bilingual competence; *
 - R4 Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best practice, in order to improve pupils' learning and progress;
 - R5 Improve the rigour and accuracy of assessment arrangements so that judgements are secure and used effectively to improve pupils' learning;
 - R6 Ensure all pupils are involved in the evaluation of their own work so they know what progress they have made and what they need to do to improve;*
 - R7 Develop the role of the governing body, so that they become more pro-active in monitoring standards and the quality of provision;* and
 - R8 Ensure that the governing body meets all its statutory responsibilities to provide information to parents.

*Aspects of these are already identified by the school in its current development plan.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

47. The findings of the inspection team differ from the school's grade awarded in its self-evaluation report for this Key Question. The inspection team identified shortcomings in pupils' achievement and progress.
48. The grade awarded differs from that of key question 5 because most pupils make steady progress whilst at school. However, leadership and management are having too little impact on raising pupils' standards of achievement and the progress they make.
49. Overall, regardless of their age, ethnicity or background, most pupils in Comin Junior School make sound progress; those with additional learning needs, including those with special educational needs (SEN), and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress and achieve well over time.
50. The results of National Curriculum teacher assessments for 2008 were above national figures in English, mathematics and science and, in comparison with similar schools (those schools within the same free school meal band), they were in the top fifty per cent of schools. Over time and since the last inspection the end of key stage results generally show a trend of steady improvement in all core subjects.
51. However, the first-hand evidence of inspection, including the scrutiny of pupils' current and previous work from the last academic year, confirms widely variable progress across the key stage and standards of attainment that do not match these assessments.
52. The inspection evidence reveals inconsistencies across the school in pupils' progress and standards in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* pupils' progress and standards have good features that outweigh shortcomings. Pupils acquire a general knowledge and understanding of the heritage of Wales through educational visits and the annual Saint David's Day Eisteddfod. However, opportunities to celebrate the Welsh dimension through literature, the arts and humanities are missed.
53. Pupils' bilingual skills have important shortcomings. By the end of key stage 2 most have a limited vocabulary and a narrow range of questions which they can answer.
54. Over the key stage pupils make good progress with no important shortcomings in the key skills of speaking and reading, and in personal and social education there are many good features. Their problem-solving,

creative, numeracy and information and communication technology skills have good features that outweigh shortcomings.

55. Most pupils listen attentively, and the more able show increasing ability to listen critically; however, many show a limited concentration span and frequent inability to focus and this is most evident when the quality of teaching has important shortcomings.
56. Many pupils speak confidently about their learning experiences, and many of the more able offer responses that are suitably extended. Overall, they respond well to questioning and articulate their thoughts clearly and confidently.
57. Over the key stage pupils read well and with good expression, and they demonstrate a wide use of reading skills, on both a group and individual basis. This results in the accurate understanding and reading of text and the ability to gather information from books and other material. All pupils receiving additional support with their reading make good progress.
58. Pupils' writing shows some good progress, but, due to the narrow range of opportunities presented to the pupils, evidence of writing across the curriculum for different audiences and purpose is limited and, as a result, pupils' standards and progress have shortcomings.
59. Opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum are limited and only within a narrow range of contexts, and this limits the progress pupils make. In general, pupils make good use of Information Communication Technology to support their learning. However, these skills are not consistently applied in all areas of the curriculum and so here too pupils' progress is held back. More recently, opportunities for groups of more-able pupils to be appropriately challenged in this area have been provided and this is having a positive impact on their progress.
60. Pupils' personal, social, moral and learning skills are good. Their attitudes to learning, the interest they show in their work and their ability to concentrate are generally good. Despite some occasional boisterousness observed in class, the standard of behaviour is generally good. Most pupils show courtesy and respect towards the staff, visitors and each other.
61. Recent initiatives to involve pupils in assessing and evaluating their own and each others work is developing well in some classes. However, the practice is inconsistent across the school and so not all pupils clearly understand how to improve their work.
62. Pupils show a good understanding of right and wrong, and sensibly discuss moral issues during circle times, assemblies and school-council sessions. However, pupils' spiritual awareness is less well developed.

63. Attendance averaged 92.8 per cent for the three terms prior to the inspection. Although this is an improvement from the previous inspection, the figure is still below the Welsh average. Punctuality is good.
64. Most pupils demonstrate a good understanding of difference and equal opportunities in social, cultural and religious beliefs. Older pupils respond in a mature fashion to concepts such as tolerance, justice and fairness. Many pupils have a good understanding of their place in the community, but their understanding of issues related to the working world are less well developed.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

65. The findings of the inspection team differ from the school's grade 2 awarded in its self-evaluation report. There are shortcomings in both teaching and assessment.

66. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
5%	52%	33%	10%	0%

67. These figures represent a decline since the last inspection in 2002. They do not compare favourably with the national picture published in HMCI's Annual Report for 2006-07 where the quality of teaching in primary schools is reported to be Grade 2 or better in 80 percent of lessons with 14 percent having outstanding features.

68. Good features in lessons include: tasks that are interesting and challenging; clear discussions with pupils centred around the learning objective and success criteria of the lesson; good planning and preparation; lessons have good pace and tempo; there are good working relationships between teachers and pupils; teachers have good subject knowledge; adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour; and teachers establish effective partnerships with Learning Support Assistants in order to support pupils' learning.

69. Where there are shortcomings, lesson objectives are unclear, tasks are insufficiently challenging, there is a mismatch of work planned to the pupils' ability and learning support assistants are not always used well enough to support pupils' learning. Where there are important shortcomings, lessons do not develop at an appropriate pace and insufficient attention is given to continuity and progression in the skills related to individual subjects. There is an over emphasis on teacher input and strategies to manage the behaviour of some pupils are not consistently implemented.

70. A good feature of teaching across the school is the good working relationships members of staff establish with all pupils. This was particularly evident in the discussions between the class teacher and pupils in year 6 when preparing for a performance and discussing designs by William Morris.

71. The extent to which teachers challenge learners to achieve excellence varies widely across the school. In a few lessons high expectations and a lively rapport successfully promote good thinking skills, such as when pupils in year 3 enthusiastically explained solutions to mathematical challenges.

72. Teachers' planning has good features that outweigh shortcomings. The learning needs of most pupils are met in some classes and lessons; however, sometimes there is a lack of challenge in the tasks provided especially for more able pupils. This holds back these pupils' standards of achievement.
73. Overall teachers do not consistently plan well enough to promote pupils' bilingual skills. This is an important shortcoming.
74. The school assessment policy has recently been updated but not yet implemented consistently across the school.
75. The school uses a range of standardised tests, mainly in English and Mathematics, to track pupils' progress. This data is used well to identify pupils who are in need of additional support. There is, however, an over reliance on using this data to determine end of key stage assessments.
76. A portfolio, with examples of pupils' levelled work to provide an indication of standards, has been compiled in English. However, teachers have not worked together to moderate their assessments, using National Curriculum criteria to annotate and level work in order to exemplify standards in mathematics, science or and foundation subjects. Although some work has been undertaken, moderation between key stages 2 and 3 is underdeveloped.
77. Pupils are beginning to understand the purpose of assessment. There are examples of group and individual target setting in English. Peer and self-assessment are at an early stage of development as is pupils' involvement in planning their own goals.
78. The school marking policy is part of the English Policy. It sets out marking procedures and strategies, for example, 'Traffic Lights' and two stars and a wish, but these are not frequently used. Where there is good practice, constructive comments and a way forward for pupils to improve their learning are noted and references are made to oral feedback given to pupils. Often, however, pupils' work is superficially marked with ticks and very short comments.
79. Parents are informed appropriately of their children's progress and invited to attend termly meetings to discuss their children's progress. Written reports do not have a consistent format. Some reports include targets to indicate the way forward in core subjects, while others detail pupils' progress and coverage of subjects only. Not all reports comply with statutory requirements.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

80. The findings of the inspection team differ from the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report. The inspection team identified shortcomings in the school's curricular provision.
81. The curriculum provided by the school is accessible to all pupils. The learning experiences provided in nearly all classes meet the needs of most learners, but do not consistently offer sufficient challenge for more-able pupils.
82. The school is in the early stages of revising and amending schemes of work to meet the requirements of the 2008 Curriculum. Evidence from previous work shows that coherence and progression in learning are not assured in all subjects. Planning is carried out broadly in a two-year cycle, but the implementation of the plans varies considerably between classes.
83. Good features outweigh shortcomings in developing key skills. Planning to ensure that all pupils acquire the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT and use them across the curriculum is underdeveloped. There are good examples in some classes where opportunities are identified in day-to-day plans, but the school has not formalised its provision.
84. The promotion of pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good; their spiritual development is promoted less well. Pupils' social development is fostered well. Daily assemblies, in line with statutory requirements, incorporate an appropriate act of collective worship that is broadly Christian in nature. However, opportunities for quiet reflection are not always provided.
85. Overall provision for pupils' personal and social development has some good features; there is a clear policy and most pupils have good opportunities in class discussions to consider emotions and feelings and talk freely about friendships and bullying.
86. The school successfully enriches pupils' learning experiences with a good range of out-of-hours activities, including Dragon Sports, chess and music clubs. There is also a well-attended Breakfast Club. Education visits linked to topic studies successfully broaden pupils' experiences and a number of educational visits are organised to such centres as the Roman site at Caerleon, Cardiff New Theatre and Cilfynydd water treatment works. These have a positive impact on pupils' standards of achievement.
87. The school is an integral part of the community and has good links with parents. Many enthusiastically support the school and provide good support at fundraising events and on educational visits.

88. Community links are good. Pupils visit chapels, the local museum and a number of businesses to learn about their local environment. These opportunities enhance pupils' learning. There are good links with local schools and transition arrangements are well planned.
89. There are shortcomings in important areas in the provision to promote bilingual skills and the language of Wales. Opportunities to develop pupils' bilingual competence are not a consistent feature of the school. Bilingualism has been identified by the school as an area for development.
90. Planning to promote the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is not implemented consistently throughout the school. Although pupils acquire a general knowledge and understanding of the heritage of Wales through educational visits and the annual Saint David's Day Eisteddfod, opportunities to celebrate the Welsh dimension through literature, the arts and humanities are missed.
91. No pupil is barred from any of the school's activities and clubs. The school openly recognises and respects diversity and promotes equality of access to the curriculum. Any incident of stereotyping is promptly and appropriately challenged.
92. The school promotes pupils' awareness of sustainable development in a number of ways and has achieved the Bronze Eco Schools award. Global citizenship is an area for development. Apart from an e-mail link with a school in Canada there is little evidence to show that the school promotes pupils' awareness of the planet and their place in it.
93. There are very few partnerships or formal links with employers or local industry and the current provision to foster effective work-related education experiences is under developed. A few teachers have undertaken one day visits to other organisations, but they have yet to undertake industrial/commercial placements and use their experiences to enrich the curriculum.
94. The development of enterprise skills is gradually developing. Pupils take part in fundraising events, the School/Eco Council has an annual budget and a few pupils also have responsibility for the money taken at the fruit shop. However, little is done on a wider scale to focus on the management and handling of money for all pupils.

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

Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings

95. The findings of the team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
96. Pupils are well cared for guided and supported. The school provides a happy, safe, secure, welcoming and caring learning environment for pupils. Parents

consider pupils are happy in school, and they are satisfied with the help and guidance provided for their children. Working relationships between adults and pupils are good. Pupils who are newcomers settle very quickly, confirming that they feel valued and respected.

97. Appropriate induction arrangements for pupils coming from the feeder infant school are implemented. Established links have been made with four receiving comprehensive schools and a smooth induction process ensure pupils move easily to their next stage of education.
98. The school council is managed according to Welsh Assembly requirements and its members can quote a number of examples of where it contributes positively to the life of the school. A governor sits in on all meetings. However, these are chaired by the head teacher. Pupil members say that he has the final decision on all matters.
99. Attendance and punctuality are well monitored, including "Late on the gate" patrols by the EWO. Certificates and other rewards are presented in termly assemblies to those pupils who achieve a 100 per cent attendance record to encourage regular attendance.
100. Overall, the school makes appropriate arrangements to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare whilst in its care. The health and safety issue identified at the time of the previous inspection has been addressed. Suitable procedures are in place to deal with pupils' welfare needs. However, a number of health and safety concerns were brought to the attention of the head teacher and governing body.
101. The school is proactive in promoting pupils' awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles, through the personal and social education programme. Furthermore, the daily meals provision offers a balanced choice of midday meal. The school has yet to achieve a health promoting school status.
102. The head teacher is the designated senior member of staff responsible for child protection and all staff members are aware of this. He has been trained in the relevant procedures, all staff have access to these procedures through a local Intranet system. One governor has specific responsibility for child protection and all new and recent staff have current Criminal Record Bureau certificates. The school meets current child protection requirements.
103. The provision for pupils with special educational needs who require additional support is good with some very good features and fulfils the requirements of the Special Needs Code of Practice. Appropriate individual education plans closely match the needs of pupils with special educational needs and parents have regular opportunities to review and update targets. As a result, pupils make good progress at their level of development in small group support sessions and in their individual literacy and numeracy programmes, such as Catch Up and Spotlight support sessions. Their progress is meticulously monitored.

104. The school has been designated as a 'Dyslexia Friendly School' because of its successful work with pupils who have such additional needs.
105. There are effective procedures to manage pupils who sometimes present challenging behaviour and to minimise all forms of harassment. There is a good relationship with the LEA Behaviour Support Team. The school works closely with support agencies on behaviour and involves parents early when the occasion demands it. Such events are not common. There is a variety of reward schemes in place to reward good behaviour and positive contributions to school life.
106. The school has suitable diversity, equal opportunities and race equality policies in place. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, visits and activities. The support given to pupils for whom English is an additional language is good. There is good provision to promote gender equality. Boys and girls work well together in lessons. Pupils are encouraged to question stereotypes.
107. The school meets the Disability Discrimination Act requirements and has a clear disability access statement and plan.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 4: Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas

108. The findings of the inspection team did not match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report. This is because the team identified shortcomings in important areas.
109. The grade awarded for this key question differs from that awarded to Key Question 1 because there are important shortcomings in the effectiveness of leadership and management and there is too little impact on the steady progress that most pupils make.
110. The school has a set of specific aims that are focused on pupils' needs. However, there is a lack of shared vision between leaders and managers as to how these aims promote and sustain improvements on a day-to-day basis. Individuals work hard to give direction to new initiatives and projects. However, these are not translated into a common and consistent approach so that they are fully effective and sustainable. This is an important shortcoming.
111. The head teacher and senior management team have had a limited impact on school improvement and there has been little indication of a whole-school approach to leadership and management.
112. The school takes account of national and local initiatives in a few areas, but overall there are important shortcomings in promoting national initiatives. There is an established school council that meets regularly. It is chaired by the head teacher, who pupils say has the final say on any decisions made. The school gained the 'bronze ECO schools award' but there are no plans to develop its provision in relation to sustainable development and healthy eating and pursue further recognition. Limited focus is given to the development of pupils' bilingual skills.
113. Although the school sets annual targets in its school development plan there is limited evidence to demonstrate the success of initiatives. This is an important shortcoming.
114. The arrangements for teachers' performance management are in line with requirements and include both teaching and support staff. However, the evaluation of the impact of professional development and its effect on improving standards is underdeveloped. This is an important shortcoming. No robust system is currently in place for evaluating teaching and learning through structured classroom observation, with the result that good practice is not effectively disseminated. The monitoring of recent whole-school initiatives, such as the 'critical skills' approach to ensure consistency, has not been undertaken and consequently the impact has been lost.

115. The governing body is very supportive of the school. Governors meet regularly and appropriate committees are in place. They discuss strategic issues and consider important documents, such as the School Development Plan and Self-Evaluation Report. The school takes appropriate account of their views. In particular, the governing body is influential in promoting a community focus in the school, but its contribution to the school's overall strategic direction is less well developed.
116. At present, governors are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the quality of provision and their contributions to school self-evaluation are underdeveloped; these are important shortcomings. The governors do not meet all their statutory responsibilities in relation to the provision of information for parents.

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

Grade 4: Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas

117. The findings of the inspection team did not match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report; this is because the team identified shortcomings in important areas.
118. The extent to which the head teacher, senior leaders and staff are well informed about quality and standards in areas across the school is variable. Some good practice exists, but this is inconsistent and monitoring in general is not well developed, neither is it sufficiently robust. This is an important shortcoming.
119. There is very little evidence of robust and well established arrangements whereby senior leaders draw together the findings of self-evaluation systematically in order to prioritise and make meaningful plans for the future development of the school. At whole-school level, the evaluation process is underdeveloped and does not inform future targets for the school. This is an important shortcoming.
120. Analysis of pupil performance data, including standardised tests, is an improving feature of the school. However, the range of data is too narrow and does not give enough attention to looking at pupils' work. Some good use has been made of the analysis of end of key stage results and specific pupils have been targeted in order that they may have the opportunity to achieve more.
121. There are no formal arrangements to ascertain the views of the governing body, parents, the community or support staff in terms of self-evaluation. However, parents have been consulted through a questionnaire and governors at meetings offer their views to inform the School Development Plan. Although there is an established school council, pupils' views are not formally sought as part of the self-evaluation process. These are important shortcomings.

122. The self-evaluation report is of variable quality. The judgements of the inspection team differ from those of the school in all but one of the seven key questions. The self-evaluation report highlights some areas of intended improvement, but due to the lack of robust monitoring it is not sufficiently linked to first-hand evidence.
123. The school development plan makes a good effort at setting appropriate targets. However, due to the lack of rigorous monitoring procedures, areas that may well have been identified are omitted. Evidence indicates that not all concerned in its production are fully aware of the importance of the document as a means of determining targets for further improvement and setting priorities for future expenditure based on the outcomes of the school's own evaluations. These are important shortcomings.
124. The school development plan shows that adequate financial resources are allocated to funding provision and developments such as staff training.
125. Currently, there is limited evidence to indicate how actions taken have resulted in measurable improvements since the previous inspection. Although the school sets annual targets in the school development plan, there is little evidence of the success of these initiatives in recent years. This is an important shortcoming. There has been insufficient progress since the last inspection. Shortcomings still exist in relation to such areas as standards in key skills, assessment, monitoring and evaluation and the role of curriculum co-ordinators.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

126. The findings of the inspection team do not match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report because shortcomings were identified in the adequacy and use of resources.
127. The grade awarded for this key question differs from that awarded to Key Question 5. Whilst there are important shortcomings in the effectiveness of leadership and management and they have too little impact on the use of resources throughout the school, there are no important shortcomings in key resource areas.
128. There are sufficient qualified and experienced teachers and support assistants for the numbers on roll. Support staff have received training in literacy and numeracy programmes, such as 'spotlight' and 'catch up'. This has been put to good use and has had a positive impact on pupils' progress.
129. The school secretary makes a very significant contribution to school administration and helps to ensure that day-to-day routines run smoothly.
130. The arrangements for teachers' performance management are appropriate. However, the evaluation of the impact of professional development and its effect on improving standards is underdeveloped.

131. Workforce remodelling and the provision of the required planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time for teachers is appropriately organised. At present there is limited evidence of improvements in the quality of education resulting from these arrangements. This is because there are no formal procedures to review the effectiveness of this provision on standards.
132. The building and grounds are clean and well maintained. Classrooms are suitably sized for the numbers on roll. However, the year 5 classroom is too small for thirty pupils whilst an empty classroom of a larger size is available next door.
133. The school uses the local swimming pool, Aberdare Museum and Forestry Commission field centres to enrich its curriculum well. With no grassed area, the school uses the adjacent Aberdare Park for some sports activities and nature walks.
134. However, even in relatively good weather, the park is damp and this limits the schools opportunity to use this facility to provide pupils' with access to planned activities.
135. Each class has a range of resources which are broadly appropriate to learners' needs. Some resources, such as musical instruments, are held centrally and are easily accessible, however others are less readily accessible.
136. Considerable investment has been made to create an ICT suite. There are two interactive whiteboards in the school, with a further two on order. However, whilst the suite is often used well ICT resources within classrooms are not used as an inherent part of most lessons.
137. Many books across the school are not in good condition and currently there is an insufficient range of recently published non-fiction books to promote reference skills. This area has been identified and, at the time of inspection, had been addressed.
138. Pupils who are withdrawn for individual and group tuition receive effective support from a support teacher and well-qualified assistants; this demonstrates very good use of resources to support learning resulting in measurable success.
139. Members of staff identify resource needs annually, but there is little evidence to show how purchases are prioritised or phased over time. Arrangements to review the use of resources are largely informal.
140. Overall, the school provides sound value for money, but arrangements to review the use of resources are underdeveloped. The governing body ensures value for money in purchases and contracts, but the school has yet to demonstrate good value for money in relation to pupils' overall achievements and the targets set in the school development plan in recent years.

School's response to the inspection

The Governors and Staff would like to thank the inspection team for their professional approach and friendly manner throughout the inspection. We are pleased to note that the inspection report has highlighted a number of positive features in our school – these include:

- the school is a caring, friendly school which develops pupils' personal and social skills well
- the school is an integral part of the community and has good links with parents
- all pupils show courtesy and respect towards the staff, visitors and each other
- pupils make good progress...in the key skills of speaking and reading
- there are good working relationships established between staff and pupils
- the pastoral care and well being that pupils receive from adults in lessons and on a day-to-day basis are good
- the school openly recognises and respects diversity and promotes equality of access to the curriculum
- in personal and social education there are many good features
- the provision for pupils with Special educational needs and those who require additional support is good with some very good features.
- The school successfully enriches pupils' learning experiences with a good range of out-of-hours activities.

We acknowledge that leadership has lacked a clear and purposeful direction and consequently not all those involved in providing education and other services understand fully what is required to ensure continued improvement.

We, the Staff and Governors, recognise the gravity of the school being placed in the category of 'requiring significant improvement' and will formulate a plan to address shortcomings rapidly and with rigour. We will address issues in areas judged to be grade 4 or 3 as a matter of priority in order to improve standards; we will improve our tracking and planning for pupils' progress by setting challenging yet achievable targets. We will also ensure that all members of the staff will be given the opportunity to undertake relevant professional development.

In addition, action will be taken to ensure leadership and management at all levels is purposeful and provides a clear, effective and consistent sense of direction to the school's work.

A copy of the school's action plan in response to the inspection recommendations will be sent to all parents. The governors will report regularly to parents on the progress we are making in achieving the recommendations made by the inspectors.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Comin Junior School
School type	Nursery and Primary
Age-range of pupils	7-11
Address of school	Hirwaun Road Trecynon Aberdare
Postcode	CF44 8LU
Telephone number	01685 875867
Head teacher	Mr. S. Edwards
Date of appointment	06.09.1993
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr G Smith/RCT
Registered inspector	Mr. J. J. Beecher
Dates of inspection	17 th -19 th November 2008

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					20	48	48	48	164

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	7	1	7.5

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	22.5 :1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	N/A
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	29
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of school
Summer 2008			92.5%
Spring 2008			92.6%
Autumn 2007			93.3%

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	16%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 2:

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2008						Number of pupils in Y6		60			
Percentage of pupils at each level											
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5
English	Teacher assessment	School							12	62	27
		National				1	1	3	16	51	29
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School									
		National									
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School						2	7	58	33
		National				1	1	3	15	51	30
Science	Teacher assessment	School							5	53	42
		National				1	1	2	11	54	32

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by teacher assessment		by test	
In the school	85	In the school	N/A
In Wales	75.5	In Wales	N/A

- D Pupils who are exempted under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum
- A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
- F Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
- W Pupils who are working towards level 1

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Three inspectors spent a total of seven inspector days in the school. A team meeting was held prior to the inspection. The school accepted the invitation to appoint a nominee, and there was a peer assessor present for the duration of the inspection.

The team inspected:

- 21 lessons or part lessons;
- all classes;
- acts of collective worship; and
- a range of extra-curricular activities.

The inspection team held meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection;
- senior managers, teachers, support and administrative staff, the LEA and groups of pupils during the inspection; and
- staff, LEA, governors after the inspection.

The inspection team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 20 parents'/carers' questionnaires, of which 97.67 per cent of responses were positive;
- a range of documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection; and
- a variety of current and past pupils' work.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Jeff J Beecher, Registered Inspector	Context, Summary and Recommendations. Key Questions 1, 2, 5 & 6
Buddug Bates, Team Inspector	Contributions to Key Questions 2, 3, 4 and 7
Dylan Jones, Lay Inspector	Contributions to Key Questions 1, 3, 4 and 7
Christine Davies, Peer Assessor	Contributions to all the Key Questions
Steve Edwards, Nominee	Attending meetings and supplying information

Contractor

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Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the head teacher, staff, governors, pupils and parents of the school for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the inspection.