

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Gwernllwyn Junior School
High Street
Dowlais
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 3HB**

School Number: 6752037

Date of Inspection: 7 October 2008

by

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Gwernllwyn 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 Gwernllwyn Junior School took place between 07/10/08 and 09/10/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Stephen Dennett, 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 **standard** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

- 1 Gwernllwyn Junior School serves the community of Dowlais, a north-eastern suburb of Merthyr Tydfil. There is a learning resource base (LRB) attached to the school, which is mainly for pupils with speech and language difficulties. The social and economic backgrounds of pupils are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. Around 20% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the local education authority (LEA) average, but above the national average. The school provides education for pupils aged seven to eleven. Around 30% of the pupils have been identified as having additional learning needs (ALN). No pupils have statements of special educational need. Around 2% of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). No pupils speak Welsh as a first language. No pupils are 'looked after' by the local authority. Approximately 2% of pupils are from ethnic minorities. At the time of the inspection, there were 103 pupils on the school's roll, including 12 pupils in the LRB. The number on roll has fallen since the school was last inspected in September 2002. The present headteacher took up his post in January 2004.

The school's priorities and targets

- 2 The school aims to *'help learners within the school and the community develop their skills, knowledge and aspirations necessary to reach their full potential as life-long learners and responsible members of society'*. The school has set a number of targets in its current development plan, which include:
 - further improve standards in mathematics;
 - further improve pupils' speaking skills;
 - develop an effective system of self-evaluation that enables all stakeholders to contribute to school improvement;
 - develop areas in music identified in the subject review;
 - further develop assessment for learning;
 - develop the school as a focus for the community and improve links with local businesses; and
 - further develop the senior management team.

Summary

- 3 Gwernllwyn Junior School provides a good quality education for its pupils. Standards are generally above average and pupils are making good progress from Y3 to Y6. The school's ethos is welcoming and caring and as a result, pupils make good progress in their personal development. Provision for pupils in the LRB and those needing support with their language development is outstanding.

- 4 The education the school provides meets the needs and range of pupils well and its promotion of pupils' well-being is good.

Table of grades awarded

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

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Area	Grade
English	2
Science	2
Information technology	2
Geography	2
Music	3
Physical education	2

- 5 During the time of the inspection, standards of achievement in the 23 lessons observed were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
5%	78%	17%	0%	0%

- 6 In the 2008 teacher assessments, standards in the main school are in the top 25% for English and the upper 50% for science. Standards in mathematics are close to the median when compared with similar schools. The core subject indicator (the number of pupils who achieved at least level 4 in English, mathematics and science) is in the top 25% when compared with similar schools. When the figures include the pupils from the attached LRB, standards were in the lowest 25% in English, mathematics and science compared with similar schools. The core subject indicator shows the school to be in the lowest 25% compared with similar schools.
- 7 The overall trend in results has been upward since 2006. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average as indicated by teacher assessments at the end of Y2. Year-on-year, there is no significant difference in the relative performance of girls and boys.
- 8 Pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve above average standards in relation to their prior attainment and underlying ability. Pupils achieve the learning targets set by teachers and by themselves. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds and make

good progress towards fulfilling their potential. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education. Pupils in the LRB make good and sometimes very good progress in their learning. The small number of pupils with EAL make very good progress in acquiring language and literacy skills.

- 9 The school regularly meets its targets in English, mathematics and science and it has set appropriately challenging targets for 2009. Pupils' key skills are good overall, but there are shortcomings in their speaking and bilingual skills.
- 10 Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their lessons. Their behaviour throughout the school day is good. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in their moral, social and cultural development, although progress in their spiritual development is less marked. Relationships between pupils throughout the school are good. Pupils know about the responsibilities of citizenship and their obligations to the community through a range of activities. Pupils' understanding of and preparation for the workplace, however, are underdeveloped.
- 11 Attendance is below the LEA and national average. Most pupils are punctual.

The quality of education and training

Grades for teaching

- 12 The quality of teaching in 24 lessons observed during the inspection was judged to be as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
17%	75%	8%	0%	0%

- 13 Teaching is good overall and occasionally outstanding, especially in the LRB. Teachers demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the curriculum, and many of the teaching strategies they use reflect the continuous professional development of their skills and competence. Teachers and support staff have established very good relationships with pupils, and the school community is characterised by an ethos of care and mutual respect. The school's policy for assessment, recording and reporting is clear and establishes effective principles and procedures. Annual reports to parents meet with statutory requirements and give detailed information about pupils' achievements.
- 14 The quality of the curriculum is good. It is carefully planned to develop a range of skills, and builds on existing knowledge and understanding with a good balance between topic work and subject teaching. It complies with statutory requirements. The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good, although it is not as strong in their spiritual development. Pupils show a concern for others, for living creatures and for the environment. However, the planning and implementation of strategies to develop pupils' bilingual skills lack consistency. Pupils have limited opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of work-related issues.
- 15 Provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is good. The school works well in partnership with parents, guardians and many outside agencies. The school recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents and recognises them as a valuable resource for pupils learning. The procedures in place to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are good and well established.

- 16 Provision for pupils with ALN is good overall and outstanding in the LRB. Most pupils with ALN in the main school progress well during their time in the school and achieve good standards in relation to their abilities by the end of Y6. Pupils requiring language support make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment as a result of outstanding provision for these pupils. Provision for pupils whose behaviour might impede their own or other's progress is good.
- 17 The school promotes diversity and equal opportunities well. A good range of multi-cultural themes are effectively promoted through religious education, music and geography. The awareness of the importance of racial equality is developed through personal and social education (PSE), assemblies and the appropriate range of reading material.

Leadership and management

- 18 The headteacher leads the school effectively and is supported well by the assistant headteacher. However, the school has faced a significant period when there was no senior management team, and is in the early stages of establishing the management responsibilities of the recently appointed assistant headteacher. Other managers and curriculum co-ordinators provide effective leadership, monitoring standards in their subjects and clearly identifying areas for improvement. The school takes appropriate account of national priorities. The governing body is supportive of the headteacher and staff, and effective in executing its duties. All statutory requirements are met.
- 19 Staff are well informed about performance in their areas of responsibility. All those who provide education are actively involved in the self-evaluation process. Staff, parents and governors are consulted and their views sought and discussed fully. However, pupils feel that they would like to be more involved in the self-evaluation process. The school self-evaluation report is a well-researched document which effectively identifies its strengths and areas for development. The inspection team agreed with the school's evaluation in six of the seven key questions. The information gathered through self-evaluation is used effectively to direct strategic planning. The school has made good progress since the last inspection.
- 20 The school uses its resources effectively. The school is well staffed. The school has a good range of learning resources to meet the needs of the curriculum. The school building and extensive grounds are well maintained and suitable for the number of pupils. The school makes efficient, effective and economic use of its budget allocation. The governing body takes its responsibilities for monitoring the school budget seriously, and expenditure is reviewed and evaluated regularly. The school provides good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to further raise standards and improve provision, the school needs to:

- R1 Raise standards in music by addressing the shortcomings identified in the report.*
- R2 Improve pupils' bilingual skills by increasing teachers' confidence in using Welsh and planning for increased use of Welsh in subjects across the curriculum.
- R3 Develop assessment procedures by building on the good practice already established in the school.*
- R4 Improve provision for work related education and further develop pupils' entrepreneurial skills so they are better prepared for effective participation in the workplace and the community.*
- R5 Improve attendance.

**The school has already identified aspects of these recommendations in its improvement 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 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 21 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 22 In the 2008 teacher assessments at the end of Y6 (excluding pupils from the LRB), 83% of pupils achieved level 4 in English, which puts them just in the top 25% compared with similar schools and in the upper 50% nationally. In mathematics 79% of pupils achieved level 4, which is at the median (mid-point) compared with similar schools and in the lower 50% when compared to all primary school in Wales. In science, 90% of pupils achieved level 4, which places them in the upper 50%, both when compared with similar schools and to all primary schools in Wales. In the core subject indicator, 82% of pupils achieved at least level 4, which places the school in the top 25% compared to similar schools and in the upper 50% compared nationally.
- 23 In the 2008 teacher assessments at the end of Y6 (including pupils from the LRB), 69% of pupils achieved the expected level 4 in English. This is below both the LEA and national averages. In comparison to schools with a similar number of pupils eligible for free school meals, this places the school in the lowest 25% nationally. In mathematics, 69% of pupils achieved level 4, which again is below the LEA and national average. In comparison with similar schools, it places the school in the lowest 25%. In science, 77% of pupils achieved level 4. This is below both the LEA and national averages and places

the school in the lowest 25% compared with similar schools. In the core subject indicator, 66% of pupils achieved level 4, which places the school in the lowest 25% in comparison with similar schools and all primary schools in Wales.

- 24 The overall trend in the school's core subject indicator has been upward. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school from the feeder infants' school is above average according to teacher assessments at the end of Y2. Year-on-year, there is no significant difference in the relative performance of girls and boys.
- 25 During the time of the inspection, standards of achievement in the 23 lessons observed were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
5%	78%	17%	0%	0%

- 26 The pupils' overall standards of achievement in the lessons observed were higher than reported by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) report for 2006-2007, which stated that '*standards are good or better (Grade 1 or 2) in 80% of lessons and outstanding (Grade 1) in 10% of lessons*'.

Subject grades for subjects inspected

Inspection Area	Grade
English	2
Science	2
Information technology	2
Geography	2
Music	3
Physical education	2

- 27 Pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve above average standards in relation to their prior attainment and underlying ability. Pupils achieve the learning targets set by teachers and by themselves. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds and make good progress towards fulfilling their potential. Pupils have a good understanding of what they are learning and how well they are progressing in their work. They also generally have a good grasp of what they need to do to improve. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education. Pupils in the LRB make good and sometimes very good progress in their learning. The small number of pupils with EAL make very good progress in acquiring language and literacy skills.
- 28 The school regularly meets its targets in English, mathematics and science. It has set appropriately challenging targets for 2009. Pupils' key skills are good overall. They achieve good standards in aspects of communication (listening, reading and writing), number and information and communication technology (ICT). However, pupils speaking skills are less well developed, as are their bilingual skills.
- 29 Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their lessons. They demonstrate a good degree of motivation, complete their tasks with enthusiasm, concentrate well, persevere and give of their best. Pupils' behaviour throughout the school day is good. They understand well the high

- expectations of the school and demonstrate a friendly, respectful and courteous manner towards each other, staff and visitors.
- 30 Pupils' average attendance for the three terms prior to the inspection was 90% which is below the LEA average and the national average for all schools in Wales. Attendance is also affected throughout the year by parents and guardians taking their children on holiday during term time. This is despite the school's best efforts to discourage this practice. Most pupils are punctual.
- 31 Pupils work effectively as members of groups and display most of the skills required to work independently. They competently gather the information they require from a variety of sources including the school library and the Internet.
- 32 Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in their personal and social skills. Pupils have good moral values and exhibit these regularly from day-to-day in the life and work of the school. They are considerate, friendly and polite to one another, to staff and visitors and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They co-operate well together in lessons and other activities. Relationships between pupils throughout the school are good. However, pupils' understanding of spiritual issues is less well developed than others as this aspect is not always sufficiently emphasised in assemblies or lessons. Pupils have a good understanding of their own and other cultures as a result of their studies in religious education, geography and PSE.
- 33 Pupils understand the principle of equal opportunities well, as the school constantly emphasises its importance. Pupils know about the responsibilities of citizenship and their obligations to the community through a range of activities. Pupils' understanding of and preparation for the workplace, however, are underdeveloped.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 34 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 35 The quality of teaching in the 24 lessons observed was judged to be as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
17%	75%	8%	0%	0%

- 36 The quality of teaching in the lessons observed were higher than reported by HMCI's report 2006-2007, which stated that *'the quality of teaching in primary schools is reported to be a Grade 2 in 66% of lessons and a Grade 1 in a further 14%'*.
- 37 Teachers demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the curriculum, and many of the teaching strategies they use reflect the continuous professional development of their skills and competence. Teachers and support staff have established very good relationships with pupils, and the school community is characterised by an ethos of care and mutual respect. The constructive and consistent praise which

- is given to pupils' efforts has a positive effect on their self-esteem, and on the quality of their learning.
- 38 The school is concerned to create a learning environment which treats all pupils equally and which endeavours to meet the varied language needs of its pupils in English. The teaching of pupils with ALN in the LRB is consistently at least good. The teaching of pupils with EAL is also very effective. The school recognises the need to develop further its strategies for meeting pupils' language needs in Welsh.
- 39 Where teaching is consistently good and at times outstanding, lesson plans are prepared carefully, and structure pupils' learning in manageable steps. Learning objectives (what pupils are going to learn in the lesson) are often shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and reviewed at the end, which helps pupils learn very well. In good lessons, teachers' introductions capture pupils' interest with effective questioning and provide a good language model and the pace of teaching maintains pupils' interest throughout the lesson. Instructions for practical activities are clear and work in pair or groups is organised well. Teachers' high expectations are reflected in the level of challenge given to pupils of differing abilities
- 40 Where teaching has some shortcomings, the level of challenge in the planned activities is not high enough, and too much time is given for their completion. In addition, there is often little or no use of incidental Welsh.
- 41 The school's policy for assessment, recording and reporting is clear and establishes effective principles and procedures. The marking policy emphasises the importance of success and of relating feedback to the success criteria (the measure of how well pupils have learned the material) shared with pupils at the beginning of the task.
- 42 The results of teachers' assessments in the core subjects from Y3 to Y6 and the results of standardised tests in English, reading and mathematics are recorded in a database. The output from this database is used to identify pupils with ALN and those who will benefit from language support. The information gained is also used to group pupils according to ability for specific tasks, and to predict attainment at the end of the key stage. Assessment in foundation subjects is mainly in the form of end of unit tests.
- 43 Teachers set targets for individual pupils that are displayed on classroom walls, but these are not consistently clear and specific, and the role of pupils in setting and reviewing their own targets is as yet underdeveloped. Portfolios of pupils' work in the core subjects are being collected electronically, and are used to enable teachers to be secure in their moderation of samples according to National Curriculum (NC) levels.
- 44 Annual reports to parents meet with statutory requirements and give detailed information about pupils' achievements. They give parents an opportunity to comment on their child's progress, and set targets for the way ahead. Parents are invited to respond to the report in the summer term, and also have an opportunity to visit school during the autumn term to inquire into their child's progress.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 45 The findings of the inspection team agree with the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 46 The school provides pupils with equal access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. It is carefully planned to develop a range of skills, and builds on existing knowledge and understanding with a good balance between topic work and subject teaching. It complies with statutory requirements.
- 47 The curriculum is accessible to all pupils, including those with ALN and EAL. Short-term planning gives appropriate attention to preparing work which provides a suitable level of challenge to pupils of varying abilities.
- 48 Planning for the development of key skills is generally good and ensures progression and continuity through the key stage. Implementation is monitored and evaluated on a termly basis, with a view to modifying and refining provision.
- 49 Pupils are able to access a range of extra-curricular activities run by staff, which enriches their experience. They include a range of after-school clubs and the opportunity for a residential experience in Dolygaer for pupils in Y6. Many extra-curricular experiences are linked to the PESS (Physical Education in School Sports) scheme.
- 50 Good use is made of the locality, such as museums, theatres, library and churches in the local community. Educational visits are arranged throughout the year, and pupils speak animatedly about their visit to forests in the National Park. Pupils also benefit from a number of visitors who come to the school, including an African music workshop and a Welsh brass trio, a theatre group and members of the local community.
- 51 The school makes good provision for PSE. The SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) scheme of work has been adopted, and is supplemented by a range of assembly topics on sustainable development. 'Circle time' (class discussions that take place in a circle) is timetabled in each class, and the positive values and behaviour patterns pupils learn are reflected in their attitudes to school. Pupils in the LRB develop good social language skills through the use of small group card and board games.
- 52 The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils show a concern for others, for living creatures and for the environment. Relationships with their peers and all the adults working in school are good, and pupils take on responsibilities willingly. They are involved in a number of fund raising activities for charities throughout the year. Opportunities to reflect on spiritual matters in collective worship are not so well developed. Acts of collective worship meet statutory requirements.
- 53 The Cwricwlwm Cymreig is planned through aspects of the geography, history, physical education and religious education curriculum. The school contributes to the Merthyr 'MANGO' database which records information about famous Welsh people, and pupils benefit from visits to 'Portraits Alone' at Cyfarthfa, for example.

- 54 In collective worship and in aspects of geography and religious education, pupils learn how important is the exercise of tolerance towards those who are different in culture and faith. Pupils are encouraged to respect diversity in learning about life and work in communities in underdeveloped countries, and about festivals and beliefs of other faiths.
- 55 The school's partnerships with parents, the local community, other schools and higher education institutions are successful, and make a good contribution to the life and work of the school.
- 56 Communication with parents includes a useful prospectus, the annual report of the governing body and regular newsletters. Parents take advantage of the two annual open evenings to discuss their children's work and progress. Parents are encouraged to help in school activities, such as accompanying pupils on educational visits, preparing presentation evenings, and supporting class activities. The parents and teachers association organises many fund-raising activities which provide the school with a valuable source of extra income.
- 57 There are strong links between the school and the Dowlais Forum community group. Pupils are involved in carol singing and performing in concerts. They make good use of the summer reading scheme organised by the local library. Members of the community benefit from the use of the school's ICT suite.
- 58 Transition arrangements from the feeder infants' school and to the comprehensive school are organised well, and the school works closely with other primary schools in its cluster. The school also enjoys a beneficial partnership with the University of Wales in Cardiff (UWIC) initial training institution, and receives students from Merthyr College on a regular basis. Students are mentored carefully and supported well by staff, and make a positive contribution to the life of the school.
- 59 The planning and implementation of strategies to develop pupils' bilingual skills lack consistency. Some use is made of incidental Welsh in some classes, but overall the provision for progress in the development of pupils' bilingual competence is under developed both in lessons and in whole-school activities such as collective worship.
- 60 Pupils have limited opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of work-related issues. Pupils benefit from some visits to the local supermarket and visitors such as the community police, fire service and clergy, who help to enhance their awareness of the world of work. In addition pupils take responsibility for the running and organising of the school fruit shop. There are no current links with industry and there have been no recent industrial placements for teachers to enhance their professional development.
- 61 Pupils are developing a good understanding of sustainable development and an awareness of conservation issues, through recycling various products. The school, school council and eco club positively promote environmental and healthy matters on a daily basis. The school is working towards redeveloping the forest area with valuable support from the community service. The school currently holds the silver Eco-Schools Award.
- 62 The school positively promotes an ethos where all children, regardless of their background or circumstance, are encouraged to reach their potential. The school sensitively ensures that no-one is disadvantaged. A good range of

- charitable fund raising events and the well planned PSE programme support pupils' awareness of equality, diversity and tackling social disadvantage issues.
- 63 There is a clear equal opportunities policy which is committed to the inclusion of all pupils and providing a curriculum that is accessible to all. This is reflected in many aspects of school life such as in games, the playground and other social activities.
- 64 Entrepreneurial and other skills needed to support economic development need to be developed further. There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding and awareness in this area. However, there is a newly elected school council who are enthusiastic and in the early stages of planning fund raising events, decision-making and budgeting.
- 65 The school plays an active role in laying the foundations for life-long learning and community regeneration. National priorities such as 'Investors in People', the Basic Skills' Quality Mark (four times) and the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency's (BECTA) Quality Mark for ICT have been achieved, whilst the Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools initiatives, are well established.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 66 The findings of the inspection team did not agree with the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report. This was because, although this aspect of the school's work has many strong aspects, there were insufficient outstanding features to warrant a grade 1.
- 67 The school works well in partnership with parents, guardians and many outside agencies such as pupil support services, the police, education welfare officer (EWO) and the local nurse. The school recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents and recognises them as a valuable resource for pupils learning. Parents' views are sought informally at any time and more formally through letters and open evening. Their opinions are encouraged and valued and the school responds positively to suggestions from parents and guardians.
- 68 The school actively promotes the involvement of pupils, parents, guardians and external agencies in the consultation and decision making processes. By involving the school and eco councils in the school development plan (SDP) this ensures that learners are aware that they are listened to and that, where possible, appropriate action will be taken.
- 69 Procedures for induction are good and help pupils to settle in quickly to school life. There is an informative welcome pack for parents and guardians. Transition arrangements are planned well and the school has very strong links with its feeder high school and is an active member of the cluster of local schools.
- 70 Registration is undertaken correctly. The procedures for monitoring pupils' punctuality, attendance, behaviour and performance are good. The school sets targets for attendance and works very closely with the EWO. Parents and guardians are aware of their responsibilities in relation to attendance and

- punctuality and are discouraged from taking term time holidays. However, there are instances of them withdrawing their children from school during term time.
- 71 The procedures in place to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are good and well established. The school gives great importance to arrangements that contribute to the well-being of all pupils. Risk assessments are comprehensive and carried out for all educational visits and activities and there are appropriate arrangements for first aid. The headteacher and the assistant headteacher are the two designated members of staff with responsibility for child protection. Their roles are clear and understood by all staff.
- 72 The school promotes a healthy lifestyle well. The PSE programme, the activities of the eco club and school council all contribute to effective experiences and awareness of the healthy development, safety and well-being of pupils. The curriculum promotes healthy living effectively and includes healthy eating topics and health-related fitness activities. There is a clear health and safety policy in place which is understood by all.
- 73 Provision for pupils with ALN is good and there are no important shortcomings. Provision in the LRB is outstanding and pupils are very well supported by the teachers and learning support assistant. The school takes careful note of assessment and other records concerning pupils with ALN, supplied by the infants' school. Teachers are quick to diagnose any further needs pupils may have through accurate baseline assessment. Most pupils with ALN progress well during their time in the school and achieve good standards in relation to their abilities by the end of Y6. There is outstanding provision for pupils who need language support. As a result of very effective teaching, these pupils make very good progress, often from very low starting points.
- 74 In mainstream classes, pupils with ALN, particularly those of lower ability, generally receive effective, sensitive support in the classroom from learning support assistants and other adults. Teachers and LSAs work closely with the ALN co-ordinator in monitoring pupils' targets. Individual education plans (IEPs) are well written and 'child friendly'. Pupils are aware of their current targets and they are adjusted on a regular basis as goals are achieved. Parents are fully involved in reviewing IEPs at regular parent conferences.
- 75 Pupils whose behaviour may give cause for concern are supported well both in the school and through outside agencies. There are well-written behaviour plans, which have clear targets. Parents are involved in supporting pupils' behaviour and as a result, there are very few incidents where pupils' behaviour impedes their own or other's learning.
- 76 The school promotes diversity and equal opportunities very well. A good range of multi-cultural themes are effectively promoted through religious education, music and geography. The awareness of the importance of racial equality is developed through PSE, assemblies and the appropriate range of reading material. The school has in place a disability equality scheme and accessibility plan, which provides appropriate information for disabled pupils, parents and guardians in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (2005).

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 77 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 78 The headteacher leads the school effectively. He demonstrates great care and concern for both staff and pupils. The school's commitment to each pupil is evident in the aims of the school and the values it seeks to promote. These focus on the development of good attitudes, learning skills and the social and interpersonal skills which are essential if pupils are to achieve well. Parents indicated their support and appreciation of the values instilled by the school in the pre-inspection questionnaires and at the parents' meeting.
- 79 All staff are aware of the school's aims and values and are committed to promoting them in their work and through personal example. This commitment is evident in all aspects of the life of the school. The headteacher and staff succeed in creating a caring ethos and stimulating environment which promote effective learning.
- 80 The headteacher is ably supported by the assistant headteacher. However, the school has faced a significant period when there was no senior management team. With the recent appointment of his assistant, matters are now improving but the school is still in the early stages of reallocating management responsibilities.
- 81 Other managers and subject co-ordinators provide effective leadership, monitoring standards in their subjects and clearly identifying areas for improvement. These are discussed with colleagues to ensure that they understand what is required of them in the process of raising standards. They also lead training for colleagues in areas that are a priority in the SDP.
- 82 The school takes appropriate account of national priorities. Planning for the new curriculum and assessment for learning are current school targets. The headteacher analyses the school's performance data carefully and staff set targets accordingly. Individual targets are also set and monitored by both staff and pupils. Performance management is conducted efficiently and teachers' targets reflect both the school's priorities and the professional development needs and interests of the individual.
- 83 The governing body is very supportive of the headteacher and challenges the professional leadership of the school when necessary to ensure an effective partnership between the governors and the school staff. A strong feature of the governing body is the way in which governors manage the school's budget to ensure there are sufficient funds, despite the fact the school's roll is falling.
- 84 Governors help set the strategic direction of the school by receiving regular reports from the headteacher and they discuss these in governors' meetings. The governing body ensures that the school meets all statutory requirements.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 85 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 86 Staff are well informed about performance in their areas of responsibility. They gather first-hand evidence from looking at pupils' work, examining planning and speaking to pupils. A strong feature of the school's self-evaluation process is the effective analysis of data to track performance in reading, spelling and numeracy.
- 87 The headteacher takes very seriously the opinions of parents, staff and governors. All staff and governors are consulted and their views sought and discussed fully. Parents are consulted regularly and the school takes note of their views and responds positively. However, pupils feel that they are not given enough say in the running of the school and the school council was not very clear about their role in the self-evaluation process.
- 88 The school self-evaluation report is a well-researched document which effectively identifies its strengths and areas for development. The judgements of the inspection team matched those of the school in six of the seven key questions. Where the team disagreed with the school, as was the case in key question 4, this was because the school had graded itself 1 (good with outstanding features), whereas the inspection team felt that the school's provision in this questions although having several strengths, did not have sufficient outstanding features to warrant a grade 1.
- 89 The governing body works effectively with the headteacher and staff in the process of self-evaluation. Governors discuss the self-evaluation report prior to approval. The governing body is committed to self-evaluation and sees it as an effective instrument in bringing about improvements.
- 90 The information gathered through self-evaluation is directly used to inform strategic planning. Areas identified as being in need of improvement are included as targets in the SDP. For example, the work done to improve provision and standards in physical education has been highly successful. Also, the provision for ICT has been significantly improved, resulting in the award of the BECTA Quality Mark. Targets are realistic but challenging. All members of staff monitor progress against targets in the SDP and the headteacher reports to the governors. The school supports its priorities well through the allocation of resources. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has dealt with most outstanding issues effectively, although there is still a need to further improve assessment, which was an issue at the time of the last inspection.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 91 The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 92 The school is appropriately staffed for the number of pupils on roll. All permanent members of staff are suitably qualified and the team has a good balance of young and experienced teachers. Permanent learning support staff make a good contribution to the school. They support teachers and pupils well, and are valued members of the school community.
- 93 The school has created an appropriate staffing structure and it uses its resources for workforce remodelling well. The arrangements in place to provide all teaching staff with the required preparation, planning and assessment time are organised effectively, and staff make good use of this. All staff have received suitable checks to establish their suitability to work with children, including an enhanced checks from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- 94 Professional development of staff is focussed, organised well and evaluated consistently. There is a high level of commitment and enthusiasm from teaching and support staff to continuous professional development.
- 95 The school secretary, kitchen staff and mid-day supervisors make a valued contribution to the smooth running of the school day. The high standard of maintenance and cleanliness of the school buildings and site is due to the hard work and commitment of the school caretaker, assisted by the cleaner.
- 96 Overall the school has a good range of learning resources to meet the needs of the curriculum. They are well organised and accessible to both staff and pupils. Information and communications technology and physical education are particularly well resourced.
- 97 The school building and extensive grounds are well maintained and suitable for the number of pupils. Classrooms are a good size and provide open and airy spaces for teaching and learning. The multi-purpose hall is used efficiently for a variety of activities including physical education, collective worship, mid-day meals and breakfast and after school clubs. Good use is made of the library to develop pupils' library skills, and the well-resourced ICT suite is used effectively to develop and consolidate pupils' ICT skills.
- 98 The school makes efficient, effective and economic use of its budget allocation. It ensures fair competition in its tendering and consistently applies the principles of 'best value'. The school has been very successful in attracting several sources of additional funding, which have been used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. Resources are well matched to priorities identified in the SDP and in the performance management cycle. The school provides good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

- 99 Pupils have good listening skills throughout the school. They listen attentively to their teachers, to each other in class, and in other formal situations such as assemblies. They also listen effectively in whole-class and in small group settings.
- 100 Pupils respond enthusiastically to questions, and confidently offer suggestions for alternative adjectives to describe objects in picture and story contexts, for example. Older pupils discuss appropriate similes and metaphors to describe objects in the rainforest, as a class, in pairs and in small groups.
- 101 Pupils of all abilities have good reading skills, and use a good range of strategies to read fiction and non-fiction texts, including phonic, picture and context clues. The majority of pupils read fluently and confidently, with both accuracy and expression. Some pupils can re-tell the story and predict possible endings, and have a good understanding of characters and plot.
- 102 Younger pupils have a good knowledge of parts of speech, and can use adjectives and adverbs correctly to improve their writing. Most pupils have good spelling and punctuation skills, and organise their ideas well.
- 103 As pupils progress through the school, they write in different forms and for different purposes and audiences. By the end of Y6, they write in a range of styles. They produce posters, write letters, recount visits they have made, keep a diary record and can sequence instructions in a meaningful way. Most pupils understand how to use similes and metaphors to enrich their prose and poetry writing.

Shortcomings

- 104 Pupils' speaking skills are underdeveloped throughout the school.

Science

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

- 105 Standards are good throughout the school and pupils are making good progress.
- 106 Younger pupils in Y3 and Y4 suggest where to find information and evidence. They are beginning to plan their own investigations and predict their outcomes. Pupils talk about their ideas and use their everyday experiences to make predictions. More able pupils make good use of their skills to present information in a variety of ways, including labelled diagrams and charts. They follow instructions safely and make accurate observations.
- 107 Pupils make sensible suggestions about which materials will insulate sound, using good scientific vocabulary. They recall that sound is made by vibrations and know that sound can be 'muffled' by using different materials. Pupils are well aware that in order for a test to be 'fair', most factors must remain the same.
- 108 Older pupils in Y5 and Y6 find and use relevant evidence, information and ideas. They plan their investigations systematically and make predictions based on scientific knowledge and understanding. Pupils understand well how the

blood picks up oxygen in the lungs and then pumps through the heart to provide the oxygen to the body's organs. They carry out investigations to see how exercise affects heart rate. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living and know that regular exercise is good for them.

- 109 More able pupils in the upper classes measure accurately. For example, they measure their heart rates and record them in a table. Then they check their findings for accuracy and take new readings when they have doubts about the accuracy of the original readings. Pupils make good use of their ICT skills to make bar charts of their findings.
- 110 In Y6, pupils have a good recall of adaption. They correctly place animals in the right position in food chains and know how they may have adapted to their habitat. One child gave the example of a giraffe's neck elongating over time to reach the highest leaves on a tree. Another child suggested that a stoat's white winter coat was a good adaption to snowy conditions. Pupils have a good understanding of environmental issues.

Shortcomings

- 111 There are no important shortcomings.

Information technology

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

- 112 Pupils make good progress throughout the school and by the end of Y6, standards are above age-related expectations.
- 113 Pupils' basic skills are well established throughout the school. They have good keyboard skills and use the mouse with accuracy. Pupils are fully familiar with the computer operating system and use menus, icons and other on-screen navigation aids with ease. Older pupils know how to access the Internet and use search engines. Many of the skills that pupils acquire are developed through their effective use across a range of subjects. Pupils use their spreadsheet skills to produce tables in mathematics, for example.
- 114 Younger pupils use appropriate software effectively to produce presentations to record their work in several subjects. Pupils in Y4 use painting programs well to produce 'stained glass windows'. Pupils select appropriate images using on-screen tools to cut, copy, paste and repeat patterns.
- 115 Pupils make good use of the interactive whiteboard to consolidate their skills and this has generated a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject within the school. Pupils make good use of video cameras and cameras to record their work in physical education, for example. They review these images on the interactive whiteboard as part of their evaluation of their performance.
- 116 In Y5, pupils use presentation programs well to produce interactive story books for pupils in the infants' school. They make effective use of 'clip art' to illustrate their stories and are aware of their target audience. They consider carefully the size of font appropriate for six-year-olds and ensure they use simple story lines.

Shortcomings

- 117 There are no important shortcomings.

Geography

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

- 118 Younger pupils study the physical and human features of their own locality. They use a digital camera to record significant buildings, and demonstrate a good knowledge of how their purpose and use have changed. They can locate buildings on an aerial photograph of Dowlais, and find Merthyr on a map of Wales.
- 119 Pupils in Y4 name the continents on a map of the world. They locate India, and name its main rivers and cities. They understand how farming and village life in India are different from farming in Wales and life in their own locality. Pupils keep records of local weather and use weather symbols. They study weather conditions across the world, and understand that they are different in different terrains. They have a good understanding of climatic conditions in desert, mountain and coastal regions, and how they affect land use.
- 120 Older pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of the water cycle. They understand the sources of water, how it is brought into homes and how it can be conserved. They compare how water use is prioritised in Wales and in an underdeveloped country. Their visit to Cilfynydd water works has enhanced their understanding of how waste water is treated.
- 121 Pupils in Y6 know that the world has tropical, deciduous and coniferous forests, and that the eco-systems and levels of bio-diversity differ in each of these. Their visits to Taf Fechan and Coed Taf forests, and to Plantasia have enriched their experience of plant and animal life in different environments. They understand that some forests are natural and some are planned. They use the school woodland to develop their understanding of how a tree plantation can be managed to provide a variety of habitats for birds and animals.

Shortcomings

- 122 Pupils' mapping and presentation skills across the key stage are underdeveloped.

Music

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

- 123 Pupils across the key stage develop good standards in singing. They sing well as a whole school, and when taking part in community and seasonal events. Most pupils have a good awareness of pitch and can sing tunefully.
- 124 Pupils identify the sounds made by some instruments, and name a good number of tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments. They use a good range of instruments to portray emotions, changes in the weather and the characteristics of different animals. In Y3, pupils show a good knowledge of the composer Saint Saens and of the 'Carnival of the Animals'.
- 125 Older pupils develop their understanding of the terms 'ostinato' and 'drone'. They perform a simple drone and improvised melody, and learn how to

evaluate and amend their own performance. They know that following a conductor improves performance.

Shortcomings

- 126 Pupils' awareness of tempo, rhythm and dynamics is not sufficiently developed.
- 127 Pupils' understanding of musical terminology and notation is underdeveloped.
- 128 Pupils have a limited knowledge of world famous and Welsh composers.

Physical education

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

- 129 Pupils have good physical skills throughout the school. They take part in lessons with enthusiasm, and this has a positive effect on the progress they make. By the end of Y6, standards are above age related expectations.
- 130 In dance, pupils show good expressive movements and make good use of space, as they produce dances in the style of Gene Kelly's '*Singing in the Rain*'. Pupils have well-developed evaluation skills and make sensible suggestions about how they can improve their own and others' performance. Pupils share their targets for improvement with each other, and this subsequently has a marked positive effect on their dance performance.
- 131 Throughout the school, pupils show good body awareness and vary their movements according to the needs of the situation. They are also well aware of the need for safety when moving and take care not to impede others when moving around the hall, for example. Pupils are also well aware of the need for exercise for a healthy body and explain the reasons for warming their bodies up before taking part in vigorous activities.
- 132 Pupils in Y5 take part in gymnastics with enthusiasm, which has a positive effect on their performance. They demonstrate a good range of movements and body positions and link these together in the form of sequences. Again, pupils are very good at evaluating their performance and suggest ways in which they can improve them. They make good use of ICT to look at their past performances and assess what went well and what could be improved. Pupils make outstanding progress in this aspect of the subject.
- 133 In Y6, pupils combine their mathematical and geographical knowledge well when they undertake orienteering activities. They take bearings and work out the direction they need to take to find markers. Pupils move purposefully from station to station and evidently enjoy the lesson, which proceeds at a good pace. This has a positive effect on their generally physical fitness and agility.

Shortcomings

- 134 There are no important shortcomings.

School's response to the inspection

The governing body and staff are very pleased that this report confirms that Gwernllwyn Junior School provides a good quality education for its pupils and that pupils make good progress from Y3 to Y6; also that our school community is characterised by an ethos of care and mutual respect.

The many positive comments in the report are welcomed, particularly those relating to the outstanding provision for both language support in the mainstream classes and the teaching and support in the Learning Resource Base.

All staff are valued in Gwernllwyn Junior School and it is pleasing that the contributions of teaching and support staff have been recognised. The quality of teaching observed was higher than average for primary schools and the contribution of support staff to the cleanliness and smooth running of the school was acknowledged.

We remain committed to continually improving provision for our pupils and the helpful comments in the report will ensure the school continues to move forward.

The school would like to thank the inspection team for the professional and courteous way they conducted the inspection.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Gwernllwyn Junior School
School type	Junior
Age-range of pupils	7-11
Address of school	High Street Caeharris Dowlais Merthyr Tydfil
Postcode	CF48 3HB
Telephone number	01685 722286

Headteacher	Mr David Rowlands
Date of appointment	1 January 2004
Chair of governors	Mrs Donna Williams
Registered inspector	Mr Stephen Dennett
Dates of inspection	7-9 October 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	-	-	-	-	24	27	24	28	103

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	5	3	6.3

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	23:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	6:1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	23:1
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of school
Autumn 2007	n/a	n/a	91
Spring 2008	n/a	n/a	90
Summer 2008	n/a	n/a	90

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	20
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	1

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 2:

The table below excludes pupils from the learning resource base.

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2008							Number of pupils in Y6		28			
Percentage of pupils at each level												
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	3	14	62	21	
		National	0	0	0	0	1	4	16	50	29	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	3	18	50	29	
		National	0	0	0	0	1	3	15	50	30	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	65	25	
		National	0	0	0	0	0	2	12	52	32	

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school	82	In Wales	74

- 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

The table below includes pupils from the learning resource base.

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2008							Number of pupils in Y6		34			
Percentage of pupils at each level												
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	17	14	49	20	
		National	0	0	0	0	1	4	16	50	29	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	1	3	20	26	23	
		National	0	0	0	0	1	3	15	50	30	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	9	14	57	20	
		National	0	0	0	0	0	2	12	52	32	

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school	66	In Wales	74

- 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

- A team of three inspectors spent a total of six inspector days at the school.
- Pre-inspection meetings were held with staff, parents and governors.
- Twenty-five questionnaires were returned by parents and analysed.

- The school's self-evaluation report and a comprehensive range of other documents were examined.
- Twenty-four lesson observations were undertaken.
- Samples of pupils' work from across the age and ability ranges were examined.
- Inspectors talked to pupils and listened to them read.
- Inspectors talked to the school council and eco club, and observed lunch times and break times.
- Inspectors attended daily acts of collective worship.
- Post-inspection meetings were held with the staff and the governing body.
- The headteacher acted as nominee and assisted the team with gathering evidence and answering questions about the school.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mr Stephen Dennett Registered Inspector	Led on: Context, Summary, Recommendations and Appendices Key Questions 1, 5 and 6 science, information and communication technology, physical education Contributed to: Key question 4
Miss Helen Adams Lay Inspector	Led on: Key Question 4 Contributed to: Key Questions 1, 3 and 7
Mrs Rhiannon Harris Team Inspector	Led on: Key Questions 2, 3 and 7 English, geography, music Contributed to: Key Questions 1 Recommendations
Mr David Rowlands Nominee	Contributed to all key questions

Acknowledgement

The inspection team wish to express their thanks to the governing body, headteacher, staff, parents and pupils of Gwernllwyn Junior School for the co-operation and assistance both before and during the inspection.

Contractors

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