



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Abertillery Primary School
Newall Street
Abertillery
Blaenau
Gwent
NP13 1EH**

Date of inspection: March 2013

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Context

Abertillery Primary School was founded in 1846 and has the longest history of educational provision in the Abertillery area. The school serves a mixed catchment area of council estates, traditional valley terraced housing and a few newer developments. It is a 'communities first' area and although having many features of economic disadvantage is a close and caring community.

The school caters for pupils between three and 11 years of age. There are currently 393 pupils, which include the part time nursery. There are 15 classes in total. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is steadily increasing and currently stands at 35%. This is above the local authority average and considerably above the national average. The school has identified 21% of its pupils as having additional learning needs. This includes a very few pupils who have a statement of educational needs. This percentage is broadly in line with the local authority average but higher than the national average.

A very few pupils come from ethnic minority background. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language.

Since the last inspection in 2007, there have been no significant changes. The headteacher was appointed in September 2000.

The individual school budget per pupil for Abertillery Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,569 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Blaenau Gwent is £5,681 and the minimum is £3,285. Abertillery Primary School is 25th out of the 27 primary schools in Blaenau Gwent in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Current performance of Abertillery Primary School is good because:

- standards of achievement are good throughout the school;
- standards of behaviour are excellent throughout the school;
- learning experiences are varied and engage nearly all learners successfully;
- the quality of teaching is good and often excellent; and
- standards of wellbeing are excellent.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement of Abertillery Primary School are good because:

- there is an excellent ethos that supports effectively improvements in learning and teaching;
- the headteacher, leadership team and governing body are successful in developing a shared vision for the school;
- the quality of leadership is good and team work is a strong feature;
- there is a sound process for self-evaluation based on a range of first-hand information; and
- targets for school improvement are focused appropriately on raising standards and improving quality.

Recommendations

R1 Improve outcomes at end of key stage 2 for more able pupils

R2 Improve pupils' oral skills in Welsh

R3 Improve further pupils' attendance

What happens next?

Abertillery Primary School will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Most pupils make good progress in all areas of the curriculum, often from a low starting point.

In the Foundation Phase, most pupils speak with increasing confidence and use a widening vocabulary. Pupils in Year 1, for example, suggest a good range of adjectives to describe the texture of a teddy bear. In key stage 2, most pupils discuss their work thoughtfully and use subject-specific vocabulary appropriately. Pupils' consistently good speaking and listening skills are a strength of the school and help them learn effectively.

Pupils' reading skills develop well. In the Foundation Phase, most pupils enjoy stories and recall a number of details about plot and character. Most use a range of reading strategies, including their knowledge of letters and sounds, effectively to read unfamiliar words. In key stage 2, most pupils use non-fiction books and information and communication technology (ICT) competently, and with increasing independence, to research and record information on topics such as the slave trade. They talk enthusiastically about the types of books and authors they enjoy reading and give reasons for their opinions.

Throughout the school, most pupils make good progress in developing their spelling, handwriting and punctuation skills. They apply these skills well for a wide range of purposes, in a variety of forms. In the Foundation Phase, for example, they write instructions for making a den, retell favourite stories and evaluate their own paintings in comparison with those of Jackson Pollock. During key stage 2, most pupils develop the skills of planning, drafting and improving their work well. They present their work in a wide range of forms such as newspaper reports, adverts and poems.

In the Foundation Phase, most pupils develop their numeracy skills well and apply them in other areas of learning confidently, for example during a creative development session when they use fractions of a piece of paper in their collage work. In key stage 2, standards in numeracy are good. Most pupils speak with ease about their numeracy and its application and use a variety of mental and written computation accurately. They transfer their numeracy skills confidently to other subject areas. For example, there are good examples of data collection and graphs being used in science, geography and history.

Pupils' speaking skills in Welsh are developing well in the Foundation Phase. They listen and respond to instructions, use simple greetings confidently and enjoy singing Welsh songs. In key stage 2, most pupils have positive attitudes to learning Welsh and are confident to engage adults and other children in conversation. However, nearly all of these pupils find it difficult to extend the conversation beyond the basic sentence patterns already learnt. Standards of pupils' writing, especially at key stage 2, are good.

Pupils' attainment at the expected level (outcome 5) in the Foundation Phase in 2012 in all three areas of learning is generally in line with that of other schools in the same family. This places the school among the highest 25% of similar schools throughout Wales. Attainment at the higher outcome 6 in language, literacy and communication skills and in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity is above the family and Wales averages. This places the school among the highest 25% of similar schools for literacy skills and among the higher 50% for personal and social skills. However, in mathematical development, attainment was slightly below both family and Welsh averages and places the school among the lower 50% of similar schools.

In key stage 2 pupils' attainment at the expected level 4 over the last four years has generally compared well with other family schools and has consistently placed the school in the higher 50% of similar schools. In 2012, pupil performance in English was slightly below the family and Wales averages and as a result placed the school in the lower 50% of similar schools. However this is reversed in mathematics and science, placing the school in the highest 25% of similar schools. At the higher than expected level 5, more able pupils' performance is below the family and national averages, which places the school in the lower 50% of similar schools. Boys outperform the girls in Foundation Phase but the reverse is true in key stage 2.

Over time, pupils entitled to free school meals and pupils with additional learning needs make good progress so that by the end of key stage 2 almost all achieve in line with their targets.

Wellbeing: Excellent

The quality of pupils' behaviour around school and in class is exceptional. The school's 'restorative practice' is instrumental in enabling pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour. As a result, pupils of all ages focus effectively on their learning and display high levels of engagement and interest in lessons. Levels of enjoyment in school life are high and instances of poor behaviour are rare.

All pupils feel safe and secure in school and they know who to talk to if they are concerned or upset. They have very positive attitudes and understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Many pupils participate in a rich variety of sporting activities to improve their fitness, for example the 'spin bike' sessions.

A very strong emphasis on children's rights permeates the school. This has had a very positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and their understanding of their right to be listened to and their opinions valued. The innovative 'rights respecting group' promotes awareness and identifies a specific right of the child to endorse each month. This excellent practice is not limited to within the school but extends into their engagement with other schools, the community and the wider world.

The school council successfully engages pupils in the life of the school. It has a good awareness of the democratic process and it makes important decisions about school life. A good example of this is its learner of the week selection.

Attendance levels are in the higher 50% when compared with those of similar schools. Unauthorised absence is low. Most pupils are punctual and nearly all are highly motivated and show a good understanding of what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

A stimulating and diverse range of learning experiences meets all pupils' needs and interests well. Almost without exception, pupils find learning fun and their lessons interesting. Teachers' planning is very thorough and covers Foundation Phase, National Curriculum and religious education requirements. Joint planning by teachers in the same year group ensures that pupils have equal access to all the learning experiences provided. Grouping arrangements work well both within and between classes to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities.

An exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' learning and has a very positive impact on their wellbeing.

There are many interesting and relevant opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their communication, numeracy and ICT skills in the different topics that they study. Teachers' planning ensures progression in pupils' development of these skills. Where pupils are falling behind, well planned and effective support helps them to catch up.

All staff make a conscientious effort to use as much incidental Welsh as possible. This is having a positive effect on pupils' understanding of basic Welsh commands, terms and basic sentences. Visits to Cardiff Bay, Caerleon and Pontypool museum, together with visitors to school and competitions such as the Eisteddfod, enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales.

Pupils participate in a good range of activities to protect the environment. They are knowledgeable about the reasons for acting sustainably and for conserving energy. The work of the school in promoting the rights of the child has a fundamental impact on pupils' awareness of their role in the wider world. They are aware of how others live around the world and pupils are keen to help others who are less fortunate develop an awareness of their rights.

Teaching: Good

Nearly all lessons are interesting and well paced, and have clear learning objectives that pupils understand. Teachers adapt tasks well for pupils of different abilities and provide good support and feedback to them as they work. They use questions well to promote and check pupils' understanding. Their subject knowledge is secure, which enables them to give good examples and clear explanations that help pupils understand new concepts. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very skilfully so that there is a purposeful working atmosphere in nearly every lesson and pupils can learn without distraction. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils' learning.

Where teaching is excellent, teachers use an outstanding mix of multi-sensory approaches and resources that stimulate and challenge pupils and successfully deepen their understanding. In the very few lessons where there are shortcomings, the pace is too slow and there is insufficient content to extend pupils' learning.

There is a very effective approach to assessment and teachers track all pupils' progress carefully. Information from assessment informs teachers' lesson planning and grouping arrangements extremely well.

Teachers' marking is of a high quality and helps pupils understand the strengths and points for development in their work. Frequent opportunities for self and peer evaluation successfully help pupils take responsibility for their own learning. Nearly all pupils know their targets for improvement.

Reports to parents give a clear picture of children's progress, achievements and targets for improvement. There are regular opportunities for parents to discuss children's progress with their teachers.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school has an outstanding, caring environment where pupils are highly valued. Pupils' wellbeing has a high prominence in the everyday life of the school. Pupils are particularly aware of their mutual rights and are keen to support each other. They develop a strong set of moral values and take responsibility for their own actions. Initiatives such as the promotion of children's rights have an exceptional impact on pupils' wellbeing, behaviour and the quality of the learning environment. Pupils' social skills develop extremely through the social and emotional curriculum, in lessons and collective worship.

The school has good arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Effective strategies promote regular attendance. The promotion of pupils' ability to resolve disputes themselves through the school's highly effective restorative practice strategies is outstanding. The consistent application of these strategies by all staff and pupils is having a significant impact on pupils' wellbeing, behaviour and attitudes to learning and, as a result, standards of wellbeing are excellent.

Involvement with specialist agencies, such as speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, educational welfare officer and social services, are highly effective. They help to improve outcomes for pupils with additional learning needs and provide valuable support for vulnerable pupils and parents.

The school's arrangement for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community where pupils receive equal access to all areas of the provision. There is a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity.

An ample supply of good quality resources match pupils' learning needs well. The accommodation is old but well cared for and maintained. Good use is made of the limited space available. Pupils have access to a broad range of learning resources which are well utilised. There are attractive engaging displays throughout the communal areas and classrooms. Displays effectively promote and sustain learning and celebrate pupils' work.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The headteacher provides dynamic and outstanding leadership. He has a clear vision for the school's continual improvement, shared by all members of staff, parents, governors and pupils. This vision reflects the school's mission statement, "learning together, reaching potential".

There is a strong sense of teamwork among staff and governors. The school has well defined leadership roles and responsibilities, shared equitably with members of the teaching staff. This leadership structure is particularly effective in ensuring that standards are maintained and improved upon. Joint training on inset days reflects in the very positive ethos throughout the school. Good relationships between all staff impact positively on the whole learning environment.

The governing body carries out its duties energetically. It effectively supports the school both strategically and practically. Governors regularly analyse data and therefore have a deep understanding of the school's performance. Nearly all governors are fully aware of how pupils' performance compares with the performance of other pupils in similar schools. They fulfil their role as critical friends very effectively and as a result have a strong commitment to raising standards.

Well-structured performance management arrangements link effectively with school, local and national priorities. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff support them well in meeting these priorities.

Improving quality: Good

Leaders and managers know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. The process of self-evaluation seeks the views of pupils, parents/carers, the local authority, all members of staff and governors. It draws on a good range of information including extensive analysis of relevant data in order to inform its self-evaluation. Consequently, the self-evaluation report accurately reflects the school strengths and important areas for development. This well-established process of continuous review and improvement permeates through the whole school.

Outcomes from the self-evaluation process determine targets for school improvement. Priorities from self-evaluation link closely to the school improvement plan and set out sound strategies for improvement. These areas for improvement focus clearly on raising pupils' standards and improving quality. Implementation of the plan is having a positive impact on provision and standards. A good example of this is the steady improvement in pupils' writing, identified as an area for development.

The school is developing a number of professional learning communities that are having a positive impact on pupil outcomes. School staff and pupils contribute enthusiastically to the sharing of good practice with other schools and other learning organisations. This improves their professional knowledge and enables, for example, the accurate moderation of pupils' work in Welsh and English.

Partnership working: Excellent

Partnerships between the school and parents, the community and other organisations are outstanding. They contribute very effectively towards enriching the provision in the school and they have a very positive impact on improving pupils' standards and wellbeing.

The school has an excellent partnership with parents. They are extremely positive about all aspects of school life, including wellbeing and homework. Parents feel very welcome and the school considers their views actively, which is based on mutual trust. For example, the parent forums are particularly innovative and effective in breaking down barriers, which can hinder pupils' wellbeing and learning and strengthen the relationship between home and school. This close partnership impacts most positively on pupils' enjoyment of learning and reinforces the high expectations of the school. These outstanding practices link closely with the school's work on 'Children's Rights' and the way in which the school manages its behaviour through 'Restorative Practice'. The innovative parent forums have been instrumental in ensuring that these practices are successful. The school hosts visits from teachers in other similar schools who come to learn about these very successful practices.

Liaison with advisory services from the local authority and other external trainers increases teachers' knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver a good range of very effective lessons.

There is very effective collaboration with a range of partners including the local secondary school. This close working relationship helps to ensure pupils' smooth transition to the next stage of their education.

Very close partnership with the local community through the church, sports clubs and voluntary organisations is an important factor in the success of the school. Pupils' involvement in charity work for several African countries through the children's rights agenda impacts positively on pupils' sense of social responsibility.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its budget effectively and has good systems in place to adjust spending efficiently in response to changing circumstances. Managers ensure effective use of resources. They deploy teachers and other staff appropriately. The school identifies priorities for staff training and these match well to the school's priorities for improvement. There are very good arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment time, which enable teachers to work together on planning issues.

In view of the good progress made by pupils, the high quality of provision and leadership, the school provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

In 2012, at the end of the Foundation Phase, pupil attainment of the expected outcome 5, in all three areas of learning was similar to the family, local authority and Wales averages. This placed the school among the highest 25% of similar schools in Wales. Attainment in language, literacy and communication skills placed the school below the family and national averages but in the higher 50% of similar schools throughout Wales. In mathematical development attainment was comparable to the family average but below the Welsh average and among the higher 50% of similar schools. However, performance in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity was a little higher than the family average and marginally higher than the Welsh average. This placed the school among the higher 50% of similar schools. Attainment at the higher outcome 6 in language, literacy and communication skills and in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity was above the family and Wales averages. This placed the school among the highest 25% of similar schools for literacy and among the higher 50% for personal, social skills. However, in mathematical development, attainment was slightly below both family and Welsh averages and placed the school among the lower 50% of similar schools.

In key stage 2 pupils' performance over the last four years has generally compared well with pupils in other similar schools and has consistently placed the school in the higher 50% of similar schools. In 2012, in key stage 2, pupil attainment at the expected level 4 overall, and in the three core subjects was similar to the previous year but below the family and Wales averages. This placed the school among the higher 50% of similar schools for English and in the highest 25% for science and mathematics. At the higher level 5, more able pupils' performance in all three core subjects, remained below the family and Wales averages, placing the school among the lower 50% of similar schools.

Gender issues vary greatly with boys consistently outperforming girls in language literacy and communication skills and mathematical development. However, the reverse is true when comparing the outcomes in personal and social skills. In key stage 2, girls outperform boys in English and science, but boys outperform girls in mathematics and at the higher level 5 in science. Results indicate that, across the school, there is no significant difference in the performance of pupils entitled to free school meals and those who are not.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Forty-four parents completed the questionnaire. Responses were slightly higher than national norms overall.

All parents say that:

- their child likes school;
- their child was helped to settle in well when he / she started in school;
- their child is making good progress;
- pupils behave well in school;
- teaching is good;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise;
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs; and
- the school helps their child become more mature and take on responsibility.

Nearly all parents say that:

- staff expect their child to work hard and to do his / her best;
- staff treat children fairly and with respect;
- their child is safe at school;
- they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem;
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school;
- overall they are satisfied with the school;
- there is a good range of activities including trips or visits; and
- the school is well run.

Most parents say that:

- the homework given builds well on what their child learns in school;
- they are kept well informed about their child's progress; and
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Responses to learner questionnaires

One hundred and two pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. All their responses were better than national norms.

All pupils say they that:

- they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- they feel safe in school;

- there are lots of chances at school to get regular exercise;
- the teachers and other adults in the school help them learn and make good progress; and
- they know what to do and whom to ask if they find the work hard.

Nearly all pupils say that:

- they are doing well at school;
- they learn how to keep healthy;
- they think homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school;
- nearly all pupils behave well at playtimes and lunch time;
- they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work; and
- the school deals well with bullying.

Most pupils say that:

- other children behave well and they can get their work done.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Peter Roach	Reporting Inspector
David Davies	Team Inspector
Stephanie James	Team Inspector
Deirdre Emberson	Lay Inspector
Karen David	Peer Inspector
Dean Taylor	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, 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

Glossary of terms – Primary

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

The core subject indicator (CSI)

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.