



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

**Ynyscynon Nursery School
Church Street
Llwynypia
Tonypandy
Rhondda Cynon Taff
CF40 2ND**

Date of inspection: May 2014

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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Publication date: 23/07/2014

Context

Ynyscynon Nursery School is in Ynyscynon Early Years Centre in Llwynypia in the Rhondda Valley. The area is one of considerable economic and social deprivation and is in a Community First area. In addition to the nursery school, Ynyscynon Early Years Centre provides full-time day care, part-time provision for two-year-olds, a breakfast club, and after school and holiday care. This report relates to the nursery school only.

The nursery caters for children aged three to four years. It admits children on a full-time basis as close to their third birthday as possible. They spend between one and six terms at the nursery before transferring to local primary schools. During the inspection, there were 40 children from the full ability range in the nursery. Around half of the children are entitled to free school meals.

There are three full-time teachers and four full-time support assistants. Three of the support assistants provide part-time support for individual children. Very few children have additional learning needs or a statement of special educational needs. Nearly all children have English as their first language. There are no children for whom Welsh is their first language.

The school was last inspected in May 2008. The headteacher has been in post since 2004, but was acting headteacher from 1997. The headteacher is responsible for the management of Ynyscynon Early Years Centre, which includes the nursery school. A change in funding for day care and for before-school and after-school care has meant that several staff were recently made redundant, including in the nursery. Re-structuring of roles and responsibilities because of these staff changes has created a new post of assistant headteacher in the nursery.

The 2013-2014 individual school budget per pupil for Ynyscynon Nursery School is £6,693, which compares to a national average of £5,715 for all maintained nursery schools in Wales.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- most children make at least expected and often good progress from their starting points;
- many achieve well by the end of their time at school;
- standards of children's wellbeing are excellent;
- children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are exceptionally good;
- relationships between all practitioners and children are excellent;
- learning experiences offer a wide range of stimulating and exciting opportunities that focus well on the interests of children;
- it provides carefully planned programmes of support, which practitioners implement effectively; and
- the school grounds are a valuable learning resource that staff and children use well.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher provides a clear, strategic direction for the school;
- the school meets its aim successfully of ensuring that children "have roots and wings to fly";
- school development planning focuses appropriately on areas that have a positive impact on children's learning;
- recent initiatives have improved children's ability to control small tools well, such as pencils; and
- partnerships with parents, the community and other providers in the Early Years Centre are strong and contribute significantly to children's standards and wellbeing.

Recommendations

R1 Improve children's ICT skills

R2 Make better use of assessment to inform planning

R3 Ensure that the newly-established leadership team is fully involved in leading and managing the school

R4 Address the wellbeing issues identified in the report

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. The local authority will monitor the school's progress.

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

Many children enter Ynyscynon Nursery School with skills below those normally expected for their age. Most children make at least expected and often good progress from their starting points, and many achieve well by the end of their time at school.

Most children make good progress in developing their communication skills. Almost all children listen well to adults and each other. They listen with interest to stories, show pleasure in their contents and respond appropriately to questions. Most children follow instructions carefully, for example when following a dance routine. Many children speak clearly using appropriate vocabulary when discussing what they are doing or engaging in role-play. Children's early reading and writing skills are developing well. Most children recognise their own names and the names of their friends. Many children handle a range of writing implements confidently, make marks and understand the purpose of writing. For example, children in the Forest School knew that a scroll of paper hidden in the log circle was a letter, a list or a map. Older and more able children identify confidently many sounds at the start and ends of words, recognise a few words, such as the days of the week, and write their names with reasonable control over letter formation.

Children make good progress in developing their numeracy skills and apply these skills well across all areas of learning. For example, children count seeds correctly in the allotment and use comparative language well when discussing which plants are the tallest or shortest. During snack time, children use the term empty or full when talking about their milk bottles. Most children count, sort and match objects to at least 10 and many well beyond this. Children make appropriate progress in developing their information and communication technology skills (ICT).

Children's standards in Welsh are generally good. Nearly all children respond appropriately to the register in Welsh and many answer questions correctly about the weather, who they are and name colours. Many follow simple commands and instructions accurately.

Most children have very good physical skills. For example, they manoeuvre wheeled toys skilfully, manipulate the controls on a digger with care and use small and large tools with increasing control. Many children resolve problems they encounter during their play confidently, such as finding ways to transport water from the stream to make a magic potion.

Wellbeing: Excellent

All children display high levels of wellbeing. They enjoy coming to school and show pleasure and enjoyment in learning. Children's levels of participation and engagement are excellent. Most children maintain high levels of concentration to

complete tasks successfully. Every child willingly chooses to take part in activities and they engage enthusiastically with staff, particularly in their creative play during 'Children's Choice' sessions.

Children's behaviour is very good. They are courteous and polite to visitors and show respect, care and concern for others. All children have extremely positive attitudes to learning and, as a result, all children are highly motivated to learn. This has a very positive impact on the standards that they achieve.

Many children attend regularly and most arrive in school on time. All children settle quickly into daily routines and work well together in pairs and small groups. All children participate very well in making decisions about what they do in school. They make sensible choices about what to play with and children accept responsibility readily. For example, they prepare lunch tables and tidy away equipment in a very sensible and mature manner. As a result, they have excellent social skills, such as independence and confidence.

Nearly all children have positive attitudes to healthy eating and drinking. For example, children understand that drinking milk makes them strong. They are confident in participating in a range of physical activities and they do so regularly. All children feel safe and secure in school.

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

Learning experiences offer a wide range of stimulating and exciting opportunities that focus well on the interests of children. Practitioners plan collaboratively to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. The school has a flexible approach to planning to meet the needs of individuals. For example, practitioners group children appropriately for social and academic skills, such as talking partners.

Provision for communication skills is particularly strong. Children are encouraged to discuss, explain and question regularly. The school makes good use of daily phonic sessions, regular story sessions and role-play to develop children's early reading and writing skills appropriately. Practitioners plan well for numeracy and develop good opportunities for children to use these skills in day-to-day activities. For example, they find and count jewels accurately when role-playing as knights. Opportunities to develop and apply ICT skills are more limited.

Practitioners promote children's Welsh language skills at every opportunity. They encourage the children to respond in Welsh and use Welsh spontaneously in their play. The school develops children's understanding of their local heritage and the culture of Wales well through Welsh stories and visits into the community.

The school provides effectively for children to understand and take responsibility for the natural environment. Children have valuable opportunities to learn about sustainability and caring for the environment through regular visits to the woodland area and the allotment. Celebrating festivals and eating food from around the world helps children to understand differences and similarities in the way people live.

The wide range of community projects, visits and visitors has a positive impact on children's standards and wellbeing and enhances the curriculum effectively. For example, visits to the local library extend children's interest and love of books well.

Teaching: Good

Practitioners have a very good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Phase. They are strongly committed to ensuring that learning is fun and that children are motivated to learn. Working relationships between all practitioners and children are excellent. Mutual affection, respect and care underpin the work of staff with the children, and, as a result, children are confident and not afraid to take risks in their learning. Practitioners listen carefully to what children have to say and take their views very seriously. This contributes positively to an environment where children are inquisitive and want to find things out for themselves.

There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-directed activities. This promotes children's independence and thinking skills well. For example, during 'Children's Choice', teachers engage enthusiastically in role-play with the children, encouraging their play but not directing it. As a result, they model play that enhances children's imagination, creativity and language skills. All practitioners use questioning well to check children's understanding and to challenge their thinking.

Teamwork is effective and ensures a consistency in approach in such things as responding to children. For example, all practitioners know when to intervene and when not to intervene in children's play. Practitioners manage behaviour very well and praise children regularly for good manners. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively and they make a valuable contribution to children's standards and wellbeing.

The school has developed its own assessment tool, based on age-related criteria, to assess and track children's progress and wellbeing and to identify Foundation Phase outcomes. Staff are beginning to use this information well to track the progress of individuals and groups of children. Assessments are generally accurate, although, on occasions, a too literal interpretation of criteria means that outcomes for the more able are a little generous. Record-keeping is comprehensive and detailed, and regular informal and formal assessments provide a clear picture of each child's achievements and their learning journey. However, practitioners do not always use assessment information well enough to inform future planning. Praise and appropriate oral feedback ensure that children know what they have done well.

Reports to parents are informative and provide them with a clear picture of their child's progress and achievement.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

The school is a very inclusive and supportive community. As a result, almost all children exhibit very good behaviour. Effective arrangements exist to support children's health and wellbeing and to encourage children to take care of themselves. For example, older children attend first-aid classes so they know what to do if someone requires an ambulance. All children attend peer massage classes where

they learn not to be aggressive with each other and that if you do not want to be touched it is alright to say 'no'.

The school makes appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. Children eat fruit snacks, drink milk and eat produce grown in their allotment. All children eat a cooked meal at lunchtime and use cutlery appropriately. Practitioners encourage children sensitively to try new foods. The school is particularly effective in encouraging children to take regular physical exercise.

The provision for children's spiritual moral, social and cultural development is good. Regular whole-school gatherings provide valuable opportunities to reinforce important values, such as kindness and fairness, and provide time for children to sit quietly and reflect. Learning experiences of high quality in the woodland area and allotment inspire a sense of awe and wonder in the children.

The school monitors individual children's attendance appropriately and uses a suitable range of successful strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

The school collaborates effectively with specialist agencies to provide valuable information, guidance and support for parents and children. Provision for children with additional learning needs is good. The school provides carefully planned programmes of support, which practitioners implement effectively.

The school has an appropriate range of policies and procedures in place to safeguard and promote children's wellbeing. However, not all staff are confident in dealing with child protection issues, and the child protection policy is not detailed enough to support good practice. In addition, two health and safety issues relating to the garden area that have a negative effect on pupils' wellbeing were drawn to the governors' attention during the inspection.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a caring and inclusive ethos where children and staff are highly respected and valued. Practitioners promote values, such as fairness, honesty and courtesy successfully. Children are encouraged to think of others less fortunate than themselves by raising money for charities, such as Children in Need

The accommodation and site are secure. The indoor accommodation is well maintained and welcoming. The school makes good use of space, including corridor space, to support children's learning well. With the exception of ICT, resources are sufficient and readily accessible to children. As a result, children find their own resources confidently to enhance their play.

The school grounds are a valuable learning resource. Practitioners use the grounds effectively to support all areas of the curriculum. For example, the woodland area provides useful opportunities for children to develop their listening and physical skills and their independence. The memorial garden encourages children to identify with, and to feel part of, the local community by celebrating 'local heroes'. While practitioners make good use of the small garden adjacent to the school, this area has

several damaged paving stones, and permanent role-play areas are showing signs of unattractive wear and tear.

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

The headteacher provides a clear, strategic direction for the school. She has established a vision and set of values for the school that ensures that children work hard to reach their potential. All staff and governors share this aim. The headteacher and governors have recently restructured the senior leadership team to reflect the needs of the school. These leaders have clear roles and responsibilities and they demonstrate a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, their role in supporting the headteacher in leading and managing the school is underdeveloped. Staff meetings for teachers and teaching assistants are purposeful and help to ensure that procedures across the school are consistent and effective.

The school takes good account of local and national priorities. All teachers and teaching assistants have a very good understanding of the Foundation Phase and they implement it effectively, particularly in relation to developing outdoor learning in the school's woodland area and allotment.

The governing body is supportive and well informed. Governors have provided clear advice and guidance in recent months during a period of instability for the school and the Early Years Centre. Governors have a good understanding of the standards children achieve. They know what the school does well and what it needs to focus on in order to improve. However, governors have not ensured that the policy for safeguarding is fit for purpose in all respects.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation processes take good account of the views of children, teachers, parents and governors. School leaders use a wide range of information to help them to see what the school does well and what needs to improve. This includes tracking the progress of children, observing lessons and looking at children's work. All teachers have recently participated in learning walks around the school. As a result, they have improved opportunities for children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

Monitoring activities provide senior managers with an accurate assessment of the school's strengths and areas for development. Consequently, leaders know what needs to improve and they use this information well to develop appropriate plans to bring about these improvements.

The current school improvement plan focuses appropriately on relevant areas that are likely to have a positive impact on children's learning. For example, this year, the school has focused on improving the strength and dexterity of children's finger movements. As a result, children's ability to control small tools, such as pencils, has improved.

Partnership working: Good

Partnerships are strong and contribute significantly to children's good standards and wellbeing. A well-established parent forum helps keep parents informed about the work of the school. This ensures that the school takes good account of their views. Parents benefit from the opportunities the school offers for them to engage and form relationships with other families. The school works well with the other provision within the Early Years Centre, including Flying Start and the day nursery. This provision helps to ensure that children are well prepared to enter the nursery and have positive attitudes towards school and learning. The school has formed good links with the local primary school and has put in place appropriate arrangements to make sure that children leaving the nursery settle well into their new school.

There are very good links with the local community. The school organises weekend activities in the woodland area every month, for example a scarecrow hunt. In addition, celebrations for events such as bonfire night are open to all and help raise children's awareness of their role in the wider community. A recently developed memorial garden helps children to understand the impact that members of their local community have played within both the immediate area and the wider world.

The school is beginning to work with the local primary school to moderate the judgements made on children's work.

Resource management: Good

School leaders manage funds appropriately to ensure that provision meets the needs of children. The governing body reviews spending carefully, for example in deciding how to restructure the staffing of the school due to recent changes in budget allocations. Leaders deploy teaching and support staff well to make the most of their skills and expertise. The school uses its indoor and outdoor accommodation well, and children have sufficient learning resources.

Teachers and teaching assistants develop and share their professional knowledge appropriately through effective professional learning communities. For example, the focus on the way children learn has helped teachers to match learning experiences well to the needs of children who learn in different ways. Teachers have made good use of professional development opportunities, for example a visit to another nursery school, to help them to maintain good provision for children during a period of change for the school.

Performance management procedures are in place for all teachers. The objectives set link well to school improvement priorities and focus well on improving outcomes for learners. Teaching assistants have good opportunities to develop their practice by attending relevant training courses.

The school's provision leads to good outcomes for pupils. As a result, the school gives good value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Primary Questionnaire (Overall)

The number of responses received were fewer than 10. No data will be shown.

Responses to parent questionnaires

denotes the benchmark - this is a total of all responses since September 2010.

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
Overall I am satisfied with the school.	13	9 69%	3 23%	1 8%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n fodlon â'r ysgol yn gyffredinol.
		63%	33%	3%	1%		
My child likes this school.	13	10 77%	3 23%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn hoffi'r ysgol hon.
		72%	26%	1%	0%		
My child was helped to settle in well when he or she started at the school.	13	12 92%	1 8%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Cafodd fy mhlentyn gymorth i ymgartrefu'n dda pan ddechreuodd yn yr ysgol.
		72%	26%	1%	0%		
My child is making good progress at school.	13	11 85%	1 8%	1 8%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn gwneud cynnydd da yn yr ysgol.
		61%	34%	3%	1%		
Pupils behave well in school.	13	5 38%	7 54%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae disgyblion yn ymddwyn yn dda yn yr ysgol.
		45%	46%	4%	1%		
Teaching is good.	13	8 62%	4 31%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae'r addysgu yn dda.
		60%	35%	2%	0%		
Staff expect my child to work hard and do his or her best.	13	5 38%	7 54%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae'r staff yn disgwyl i fy mhlentyn weithio'n galed ac i wneud ei orau.
		63%	34%	1%	0%		
The homework that is given builds well on what my child learns in school.	13	6 46%	5 38%	1 8%	1 8%	0	Mae'r gwaith cartref sy'n cael ei roi yn adeiladu'n dda ar yr hyn mae fy mhlentyn yn ei ddysgu yn yr ysgol.
		47%	40%	6%	1%		
Staff treat all children fairly and with respect.	13	6 46%	7 54%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r staff yn trin pob plentyn yn deg a gyda pharch.
		58%	34%	4%	1%		

	Number of responses Nifer o ymatebion	Strongly Agree Cytuno'n gryf	Agree Cytuno	Disagree Anghytuno	Strongly disagree Anghytuno'n gryf	Don't know Ddim yn gwybod	
My child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular exercise.	13	8 62%	4 31%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Caiff fy mhlentyn ei annog i fod yn iach ac i wneud ymarfer corff yn rheolaidd.
		59%	36%	2%	0%		
My child is safe at school.	13	8 62%	5 38%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn ddiogel yn yr ysgol.
		66%	31%	1%	0%		
My child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs'.	13	6 46%	4 31%	3 23%	0 0%	0	Mae fy mhlentyn yn cael cymorth ychwanegol priodol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw anghenion unigol penodol.
		50%	34%	4%	1%		
I am kept well informed about my child's progress.	13	5 38%	7 54%	1 8%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n cael gwybodaeth gyson am gynnydd fy mhlentyn.
		49%	41%	8%	2%		
I feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem.	13	7 54%	5 38%	1 8%	0 0%	0	Rwy'n teimlo'n esmwyth ynglŷn â gofyn cwestiwn i'r ysgol, gwneud awgrymiadau neu nodi problem.
		62%	31%	4%	2%		
I understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.	12	5 42%	4 33%	1 8%	0 0%	2	Rwy'n deall trefn yr ysgol ar gyfer delio â chwynion.
		44%	39%	7%	2%		
The school helps my child to become more mature and take on responsibility.	13	6 46%	7 54%	0 0%	0 0%	0	Mae'r ysgol yn helpu fy mhlentyn i ddod yn fwy aeddfed ac i ysgwyddo cyfrifoldeb.
		56%	39%	2%	0%		
My child is well prepared for moving on to the next school or college or work.	13	7 54%	5 38%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae fy mhlentyn wedi'i baratoi'n dda ar gyfer symud ymlaen i'r ysgol nesaf neu goleg neu waith.
		42%	34%	4%	1%		
There is a good range of activities including trips or visits.	13	5 38%	6 46%	2 15%	0 0%	0	Mae amrywiaeth dda o weithgareddau, gan gynnwys teithiau neu ymweliadau.
		53%	38%	5%	1%		
The school is well run.	13	8 62%	4 31%	0 0%	0 0%	1	Mae'r ysgol yn cael ei rhedeg yn dda.
		61%	33%	3%	2%		

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Beverley Jenkins	Reporting Inspector
Jane Mccarthy	Team Inspector
Matthew Evans	Lay Inspector
Amanda Stanford	Peer Inspector
Susan Allan	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.