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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Pontarddulais Primary School

**Upper James Street
Pontarddulais
Swansea
SA4 1JD**

Date of inspection: January 2011

by

Dorothy Morris

under contract to

**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

Pontarddulais Primary School is located in the town of Pontarddulais and is maintained by the City and County of Swansea local authority. It caters for pupils aged three to eleven years old. There are 353 pupils on roll and school numbers have remained stable over recent years.

The school considers that the majority of its pupils come from residential areas that are neither economically prosperous nor disadvantaged, but it also draws pupils from areas that are designated as socially and economically disadvantaged. Twenty one per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals; a figure which is similar to the local authority average and marginally above the national average.

Pupils attending the school represent the full range of ability. Currently, 30% of pupils are designated as having special educational needs (SEN); a figure that is significantly above the local authority and national averages. Five pupils have a statement of SEN.

Nearly all pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language. Ten pupils have support in English as an additional language (EAL) and there are a few pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The school has achieved many awards. It is an accredited Healthy School and has achieved Eco School status. It has met the standards to gain Investors in People accreditation and has also achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the third time.

The current headteacher was appointed in 2009.

The individual school budget per pupil for Pontarddulais Primary School is £2918 which compares with a maximum of £5744 and a minimum of £2550 for primary schools in the local authority. The school has the 68th highest budget per pupil out of the 89 primary schools in the authority.

Summary

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

Current performance

Pontarddulais Primary School is a good school because:

- there are excellent features in the headteacher's leadership which impact highly effectively on improving standards and the quality of learning;
- nearly all pupils make good progress;
- teaching is good overall;
- pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good;
- the school provides a stimulating and inclusive learning environment that engages learners;
- staff know their school well and work collaboratively and effectively in securing improvements.

Prospects for improvement

The school has excellent prospects for improvement because:

- the headteacher provides outstanding leadership to a very committed team;
- school leaders have extremely high expectations and are good role models in raising standards and improving learning;
- the leadership structure ensures the active and successful participation of all staff in planning improvement;
- the school embraces and develops innovative approaches in extending the leadership skills of senior staff and in promoting highly effective primary secondary links;
- the school's core values are exceptionally well reflected in the highly positive and inclusive ethos which permeates all aspects of its provision;
- there are robust systems and processes in place to review progress and initiate further improvements;
- there is very good use of well-established partnerships to enrich the educational provision.

Recommendations

In order to develop further, the school needs to:

- R1 build on the good standards and raise the attainment of more able pupils at the end of key stage 1;
- R2 refine the planning to extend pupils' writing skills in key stage 1;
- R3 further embed assessment for learning strategies across the school; and
- R4 extend the role of the governing body in monitoring performance and offering challenge.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the school 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
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Standards: Good

Many children enter the school with skills below those normally expected of children of their age especially in language and mathematics. Nearly all make good progress in their learning during their time at the school.

Over the past three years, the percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 1 that achieved the core subject indicator (CSI), the expected level in English, mathematics and science, has been consistently above the family of schools, local authority and all Wales averages. When compared with similar schools, based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's performance is above the average and frequently in the top 25%.

At key stage 2, teachers' assessments over the last three years show a steady upward trend in pupil outcomes. The percentage of pupils achieving the CS1 has been consistently above the local authority and all Wales averages, and for the last two years has also been above the family of schools. When compared with similar schools, based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's performance is above the average and in the top 25% in the last two years.

Over recent years, the percentage of pupils achieving above the expected level (level 3) at the end of key stage 1 fluctuates considerably when compared with the family of schools, local authority and all Wales averages, particularly in English and science. Outcomes overall, however, reflect a general downward trend. In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils achieving above the expected level (level 5) has improved. In 2010, it was above the local authority and all Wales averages and similar to the family of schools.

There is little difference overall in the attainment of boys and girls. Most pupils with additional learning needs and those entitled to free school meals make good progress and achieve well relative to their age and stage of development.

Standards in pupils' key and basic skills are good overall. Pupils across the school listen well and nearly all speak confidently in different situations. Most pupils read competently and generally with a good understanding. Pupils write for a range of purposes but in key stage 1, many pupils do not write sufficiently at length and their grasp of basic punctuation is insecure. In key stage 2, most pupils make effective use of their writing skills and standards are good. Across the school, pupils generally achieve good standards in applying their numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills in other subjects with many older pupils achieving very good standards in their work.

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Most pupils apply their thinking, investigating and problem-solving strategies well in many aspects of their work. In design and technology in both key stages, and in mathematics in upper key stage 2, for example, most pupils demonstrate skilful and confident use of a range of skills in different contexts.

Standards in Welsh are good. Across the school, most pupils understand and respond accurately and confidently to a range of questions and instructions during lessons, collective worship and in a general manner throughout the day. As they proceed through the school, they use their reading and writing skills with increasing accuracy and confidence in different tasks and activities.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners who enjoy school. They demonstrate very good attitudes to learning and take pride in their achievements. They collaborate effectively with their peers and staff in a very happy environment.

Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the benefits of keeping healthy and taking regular exercise. They develop a good range of social and life skills through participating in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. All pupils behave very well, both within and outside of the classroom.

Pupils value the range of responsibilities given to them within the school as monitors, helpers and prefects. In discussion, older pupils explain clearly the expectations and the benefits of these roles in ensuring that the school is an orderly and happy place. Pupils across the school confirm that they feel safe and know who to turn to for help and support. Members of the Eco Committee and School Council undertake their roles conscientiously and have influenced decisions such as the introduction of the fruit tuck shop and zoning the playground areas.

Over the past three years, pupils' attendance levels at 92% have been a little below the national and local averages and those of similar schools. As a result of the school's good efforts, more recent trends show an improvement. Nearly all pupils arrive on time.

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

Staff provide a good range of stimulating and interesting learning experiences which meet the needs of pupils well. Lessons are planned in detail promoting effective continuity and progression in most areas of learning. Pupils are involved in planning termly topics alongside the teachers which offers them good opportunities to contribute to decisions about the topics they study.

Provision for developing pupils' skills is good overall. All teachers include the wider skills, such as thinking, collaboration, numeracy and communication, in lesson plans. Staff collaborate well to ensure that pupils build systematically on their skills in all

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subject areas. This is a strength, particularly in key stage 2. In key stage 1, however, there is insufficient focus on extending pupils' writing skills.

The school gives good attention to promoting education for sustainable development and global citizenship in work across the curriculum. Culture and diversity is celebrated well through a range of activities, including links with schools in France and China.

Provision and planning for Welsh language development is good and the Welsh dimension is a strong feature particularly in key stage 2. As part of the provision for Cwricwlwm Cymreig, older pupils in particular undertake well planned studies of the history and geography of the local area.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is good overall. All teachers have good subject knowledge which they use effectively in their teaching. Teachers and other practitioners use a variety of strategies well to motivate pupils and to incorporate key skills into lessons. There are elements of challenge in most lessons. Adult support is well planned and contributes significantly to the learning.

The quality of assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress is good. The school has clear, efficient systems for tracking and maintaining information on pupils' progress. It makes good use of standardised tests, as well as teachers' own assessments, to set class targets for pupils that are both challenging and realistic.

Teachers make good use of the outcomes of on-going assessment to plan the next steps for learning. This is a very strong feature in the Foundation Phase. Assessment for learning strategies are becoming embedded but are not used consistently across the school.

Parents are kept well informed about their children's achievements and targets through comprehensive end of year written reports, regular newsletters and meetings.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are effective arrangements, including the use of a wide range of specialist services, to support pupils' health and wellbeing and promote good life skills. This includes effective policies to promote very good behaviour. The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

The overall provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. The staff identify pupils' additional learning needs early and provide a network of support activities which contribute to improved standards of achievement. On occasion, the additional support provided through withdrawal groups is not sufficiently linked to activities in class. Pupils' individual education plans include clear targets and are regularly evaluated and updated. The school provides good support for pupils who are more able and talented through additional activities and small group tuition.

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Good learning experiences successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Learning environment: Excellent

The high quality of the learning environment demonstrates the headteacher's commitment to ensuring that the school's core values are reflected fully in practice. A whole school approach in creating an ethos where pupils' personal qualities, efforts and achievements are recognised and celebrated provides an excellent environment for effective teaching and learning. This is evident, for example, in collective worship sessions which offer pupils a very strong sense of community and belonging; this is an outstanding feature.

The school is an inclusive community and ensures equal opportunity for all pupils. The importance of valuing diversity is well reflected in its daily life and work.

The accommodation and school site provide a very good range of learning facilities which are utilised fully to support and enhance the curriculum. A strong feature is the quality of the displays which contributes to the attractive learning environment and successfully engages pupils' interest and involvement. There is very effective use of relevant and available resources to support the teaching and learning.

Enrichment activities in the form of extra-curricular activities and clubs are an intrinsic part of the learning environment. They provide an excellent range of quality experiences which extend pupils' skills and improve learning.

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

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. He has a clearly defined vision for the school which is understood and shared by all. His high expectations and commitment to improving standards provide strong direction and purpose to the work of school. He is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher whose thorough understanding of curriculum development and pupil learning contributes significantly to the quality of provision.

The culture of collaboration and support amongst all staff is a very strong feature of the school. Staff with leadership responsibilities are good role models in promoting further school improvement. Distributed leadership is further enhanced by the headteacher's daily interaction with pupils and staff across the school.

All teachers and staff are offered very good opportunities to lead or support aspects of school improvement. This enables staff to extend their knowledge of school development and fosters leadership skills. The deputy headteacher's recent temporary deployment to a shared senior leadership role at the local secondary school has been a highly successful and innovative development. It has contributed to the establishment of sound professional relationships between staff in the two

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schools which has enabled the successful sharing of cross phase expertise and experiences. It has also contributed to promoting a broader understanding of learning and progression across both phases.

There is a close and proactive partnership with the governing body which fully supports the school. Members offer their expertise to the staff and make valued contributions to the curriculum and school life. They have a good understanding of the school's performance and their role in acting as a critical friend and providing challenge is developing.

The school is effective in addressing national and local priorities. The Foundation Phase is being successfully implemented and the skills-based curriculum is developing well.

Improving quality: Good

The school's robust self-evaluation process ensures effective monitoring of provision and standards. It is inclusive of all members of the school community and open dialogue is encouraged. A systematic, whole-school approach ensures that staff regularly discuss aspects of the curriculum and review pupils' progress. There is rigorous analysis of data with good use of outcomes to identify areas for improvement. As a result, planning for improvement reflects an accurate evaluation of its provision and offers the school a relevant agenda for further development.

The school is very much a learning community where staff collaborate in identifying and delivering improvement strategies and shared learning. It is developing effective networks of professional practice among its own staff and with the local cluster of schools focussing on aspects such as reading support, numeracy and thinking skills.

The school has successfully addressed the recommendations of the previous inspection and continues to strive for further improvement.

Partnership working: Excellent

The school has an extensive range of strategic partnerships which promote pupils' educational and personal development highly effectively. The school's partnership with the local secondary school is a particular strength and induction arrangements are exemplary. In discussion, staff, parents and former pupils confirm the educational and social benefits gained from this programme in that pupils transfer with confidence and enthusiasm.

The deputy headteacher has been proactive in promoting collaboration and joint working practices within the cluster of local schools focussing particularly effectively on aspects of teaching, learning and standards. She has demonstrated exceptional management skills together with a very good understanding of skills-based learning in promoting curriculum development in areas such as the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, reading recovery and, in particular, numeracy. These initiatives have further enriched the school's own curriculum and the outcomes, particularly of the numeracy project, have been shared with other schools and practitioners.

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Partnerships with the community are of very high quality. This is a community focussed school and there is extensive use of the school's facilities by local groups and associations. Members of the community contribute to the extended curriculum by leading many after school clubs and activities. These partnerships offer pupils a wealth of additional learning opportunities and contribute particularly effectively to developing their awareness of the opportunities for lifelong learning.

Resource management: Good

The school budget is carefully managed, and regularly reviewed and monitored. Spending is linked to priorities for improvement and the benefit of the pupils. Proactive and long term spending plans ensure the school is able to meet national initiatives successfully. The school actively pursues many ways of raising additional funds and has been successful in securing additional grants and income to supplement the school's budget.

Staff are appropriately qualified and effectively deployed. Performance management processes are inclusive of all staff and the school meets the requirements for workforce remodelling. Teachers make good use of their planning, preparation and assessment time and the benefits are evident in further curricular and assessment initiatives. The buildings and grounds are well maintained and a recent extension has considerably enhanced the provision for the Foundation Phase. There are sufficient resources of good quality to deliver the curriculum with extensive use of offsite facilities.

The school provides good value for money in terms of pupils' outcomes and the extensive range of learning experiences provided.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Over a third of parents/carers completed the questionnaire and all express overall satisfaction with the school. Nearly all parents make positive responses in relation to most aspects of provision. They say that their children like being there and believe that they are safe at school. They believe that their children make good progress and that they, as parents, are kept well informed. They add that children receive sufficient additional support in relation to their learning needs. They believe that the school treats all children fairly and with respect and that they are sufficiently prepared to move on to their next school.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Most pupils in key stage 2 completed the questionnaire. Nearly all state that they feel safe, enjoy school and know who to turn to for help and guidance. Nearly all believe that they are doing well. There is agreement that the school teaches them how to keep healthy and to live healthier lifestyles. Nearly all believe that there are enough resources to enable them to learn well. A minority feel that other pupils do not behave well at all times and this has an impact on their ability to get their work done.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Dorothy Morris	Reporting Inspector
Alona Jones	Team Inspector
Christine Brunton	Team Inspector
Gwilym Davies	Lay Inspector
Lisa Bailey	Peer Inspector
Jonathan Mead	School Nominee

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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 five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six 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 four key stages cover the following year groups:

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