

**A report on**  
**Penalltau Welsh-Medium Primary School**  
**Cwm Calon**  
**Ystrad Mynach**  
**Caerphilly**  
**CF82 6AP**

**Date of inspection: 28 February - 2 March 2011**

**by**  
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**Reporting Inspector, under contract to Estyn**

**for**  
**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                                                  |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Excellent</b>      | Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice |
| <b>Good</b>           | Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement   |
| <b>Adequate</b>       | Strengths outweigh areas for improvement                                  |
| <b>Unsatisfactory</b> | 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

Penalltau is a Welsh-medium Primary School located in the middle of a new housing estate called Cwm Calon, near Ystrad Mynach in the county of Caerphilly. The school's wide catchment area includes the villages of Penybryn, Gelligaer, Glyn-gaer, Glan y Nant, Tir y Berth and Penpedairheol. A number of these areas are considered to be deprived areas.

The school was opened in September 2009 with 18 pupils (only seven of whom were of statutory school age) and none was entitled to receive free school meals. By now there are 52 pupils in the school, including those who are nearly three, with 20% of pupils of statutory age entitled to receive free school meals. This figure is close to national and local averages. At present there are eight children on the special educational needs (SEN) register, which is 15% of the school roll, a figure which is below national and local averages. By now a significant percentage of pupils of statutory age have transferred to the school from English-medium schools.

Foundation Phase children receive their education entirely through the medium of Welsh and English is introduced as a subject in key stage 2 (KS2).

There are two classes in the school: one for nursery children (part time) and one for reception children and pupils up to year 4. All the pupils come from homes where Welsh is not the main language of the home.

The head teacher started at the school when the school opened.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Penalltau school is £6296, which compares with a maximum of £6296 and a minimum of £2486 for primary schools in Caerphilly. The school has the highest budget per pupil out of the 75 primary schools in Caerphilly

## Summary

|                                               |             |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>The school's current performance</b>       | <b>Good</b> |
| <b>The school's prospects for improvement</b> | <b>Good</b> |

### Current performance

The school is good because:

- most pupils make positive progress during their period in the school;
- the quality of teaching is good;
- the school promotes an ethos of care, respect and equality in an active manner; and
- teachers take good care of pupils and plan appropriate and differentiated activities to ensure their progress.

### Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the school's self-evaluation processes are effective and, as a result, they identify correctly the school's strengths and weaknesses;
- plans for improvement lead to effective action and standards in the areas which require attention are rising; and
- the head teacher's leadership is good; she has a clear vision and focuses well on raising standards.

## Recommendations

In order to improve, the school needs to:

- R1 raise pupils' reading standards;
- R2 continue to develop the assessment system and the electronic tracking process; and
- R3 further develop the provision for global citizenship and sustainability.

### *What happens next?*

Penalltau school will revise the current action plan in order to respond in full to the recommendations.

## Main findings

|                                        |      |
|----------------------------------------|------|
| Key Question 1: How good are outcomes? | Good |
|----------------------------------------|------|

### Standards: Good

When they start at the school, nearly all children have average levels of basic skills with approximately half of them having attended pre-school education. Most achieve the outcomes expected of their age by the end of the Foundation Phase.

Pupils' results in key stage 1(KS1) were the first in the history of the new school. Also, from examining the context, it can be seen that the number of pupils in year 2 were comparatively small and a significant percentage of them had SEN. Because of the very small number that were at the end of KS1, the first results of teacher assessments have to be treated with great care because one pupil's results can have a significant effect on the school's overall performance.

In KS1 in 2010, teacher assessments in Welsh, mathematics and science were below national, local and family averages. The core subject indicator (CSI), which is the percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in Welsh, mathematics and science combined, was also below the national, local and family of schools' averages.

KS1 pupils' results in 2010 show the school in the lowest quartile of schools with the same number of free school meals and it is the lowest school in the family of similar schools. In 2010 no one reached level three, which is the highest possible grade. Boys performed better than girls in 2010.

A Report on Penalltau Welsh-Medium Primary School  
February 2011

Most of the pupils, including those with SEN and those entitled to free school meals, make good progress in developing most key skills. Nearly all listen attentively and communicate clearly. By the end of KS1 the vast majority use the Welsh language confidently, in relation to their linguistic attainment on entry to the school. Most pupils' oral standards in Welsh and English are especially good.

Most pupils' reading standards are adequate in Welsh. Most develop effective creative writing skills in both languages and they write stories, small pieces of poetry and news competently. Most pupils make good progress in numeracy across the curriculum and make effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) skills. Pupils' ability to work in pairs and groups independently is a good feature across the school.

**Wellbeing: Good**

Most pupils have positive attitudes towards healthy living and keeping fit. Overall they feel safe in school.

Pupils express their opinions regarding what they learn at the beginning of each term. Many of them enjoy learning and they display pride and confidence in their work. Their good behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning are a reflection of their motivation to succeed. They relate well to each other, especially in the mixed age classes.

Many pupils show caring attitudes towards each other and towards possessions. They are willing to undertake responsibilities and to act for the benefit of others. When they work together, many display positive characteristics such as patience and tolerance.

Pupils' attendance rate for the three terms prior to the inspection is 94.4% and this is higher than local and national figures. The absence without authority rate for the past three terms is 2% and this is higher than local and national figures. The school is beginning to work more closely with the Welfare Officer to improve this situation.

|                                               |             |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b> | <b>Good</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|

**Learning experiences: Good**

The school provides a balanced and stimulating curriculum which engages the interest of all pupils. Lessons are planned thoroughly and carefully in order to respond to the needs of pupils, who vary according to age and ability. The school attempts to enrich pupils' learning experiences by providing a variety of extra-curricular activities, inviting visitors to school and by visiting various places within the local area, such as Llancaich Fawr Manorhouse and Cantref Farm.

There are good procedures and strategies for promoting pupils' increasing understanding of the Welsh language and the use they make of it. The provision to develop pupils' oral skills has been planned thoroughly and systematically, but it is less effective in developing their reading skills. There is successful preparation for promoting writing skills across the curriculum. Pupils receive appropriate

A Report on Penalltau Welsh-Medium Primary School  
February 2011

opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in groups. The provision to develop numeracy, ICT and communication skills is effective.

There is good provision to promote pupils' awareness of the culture and heritage of Wales and this is given a high priority through a range of curricular activities and the everyday life of the school.

Procedures to promote sustainable development and global citizenship are adequate.

**Teaching: Good**

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of the areas and subjects they teach. Detailed and appropriate plans have been prepared and are implemented carefully throughout the school.

Teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and deliver lively lessons. They include everyone in discussions and support pupils effectively as they work. They question appropriately and searchingly in order to advance pupils' learning and introduce very effective differentiated work. Support staff intervention is good and ensures full support for specific pupils. There are appropriate opportunities to ensure the development of key skills across the curriculum. Teachers set clear success criteria for pupils.

Pupils' achievement is regularly assessed and the outcomes are analysed carefully to track progress. Teacher assessments are used to set targets for improvement. The school is currently in the process of developing a new procedure to track pupils' progress.

Assessment for learning strategies and independent learning skills are implemented and pupils have their own personal targets.

Pupils receive appropriate oral and written feedback from teachers and support staff. Parents receive information about their children's achievement and progress in the form of an annual report and in two meetings during the year. Parents state that these reports are clear, informative and provide their children with targets for improvements.

**Care, support and guidance: Good**

There are effective arrangements in place to support the health and wellbeing of pupils, such as the Super Shelby emotional literacy plan. These arrangements contribute well to pupils' development and support their learning effectively. Anti-bullying arrangements are implemented and are displayed visually around the buildings and pupils are very aware of them. The provision to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects has been effectively developed and it has a positive effect on their behaviour. Aspects of the school's Personal and Social Education (PSE) arrangements and circle time contribute well to this area.

The school has established good partnerships with specialist agencies in order to ensure additional support for pupils and parents.

A Report on Penalltau Welsh-Medium Primary School  
February 2011

The school has an appropriate policy and it has procedures for safeguarding.

Effective procedures ensure that pupils with SEN are identified early, and they are supported by a variety of appropriate programmes and strategies. Members of staff contribute effectively to ensure that those pupils with SEN succeed in reaching the targets set for them. Individual learning plans have been designed purposefully and they offer guidance for teachers, pupils and parents.

**Learning environment: Good**

The friendly, hard working and inclusive ethos, which is based on positive support and secure relationships, is one of the school's strengths. Equal opportunity issues and those relating to diversity and equality in the life of the school are dealt with effectively, and the robust arrangements that are in place ensure good behaviour throughout the school. The school succeeds in creating a feeling of unity and purpose.

Classrooms are welcoming with colourful displays highlighting current tasks and they successfully celebrate pupils' work. Good use is made of the new building and the school grounds to create stimulating, outdoor learning areas. The school building and school grounds are appropriately maintained. Resources are of good quality and are used well.

|                                                                |             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b> | <b>Good</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

**Leadership: Good**

The head teacher's thoughtful and purposeful leadership succeeds in co-ordinating the efforts of the governing body, staff and parents in an effective manner, ensuring a strong sense of direction to the work of the school. They are all committed to the aims and objectives of the school, they share agreed values and they have high expectations of pupils' development and success.

The head teacher undertakes her responsibilities effectively. Teaching and support staff work together well as a team, taking on an appropriate share of curricular and management responsibilities. Under the head teacher's energetic and sensitive leadership, they meet regularly to discuss issues relating to the everyday running of the school and their opinions are considered before making strategic decisions.

The school takes good account of national and local priorities and collaborates effectively with a number of partners. The school successfully undertakes a number of initiatives, such as the Healthy Schools and Eco Schools agendas. Positive steps have been undertaken to implement the requirements of the Foundation Phase. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored by the head teacher and there are effective arrangements in place to identify and meet teachers' professional needs.

Members of the governing body have a thorough knowledge of the school's priorities and they co-operate very successfully to assist the head teacher in giving a strategic direction to the work of the school. They adopt a critical attitude to their work, constantly searching for more effective ways to operate.

### **Improving quality: Good**

Under the head teacher's energetic and skilful leadership, a self-evaluation culture and planning for improvement are developing well within the school. Consequently, members of staff and the governing body have a clear picture of the school's performance, its strengths and the areas that need to be further developed. There is a good range of monitoring activities, mainly undertaken by the head teacher. All members of staff and members of the governing body have an opportunity to contribute to the self-evaluation process. The school welcomes parents' comments and is developing procedures to further strengthen pupils' voice.

Different types of data are interpreted effectively in order to gain a clear picture of pupils' progress and motivation and specific targets are set. Good use is made of advisory support in the self-evaluation process. The school's self-evaluation document is comprehensive and very helpful, providing a clear picture of the school.

There is a strong link between the self-evaluation process and planning for improvement and the information that is collected is used effectively to produce a clear and comprehensive School Development Plan (SDP).

There are good procedures to support the professional development of members of staff and effective collaboration between the school and other schools within the local cluster. This network makes a good contribution to the school's overall provision.

### **Partnership working: Good**

There is a range of effective partnerships with parents, the governing body, the local community, including organisations that promote the Welsh language, nursery groups (cylch meithrin), the education authority, care agencies and local schools. In addition, links with the world of business are developing well. All these make a positive contribution to the quality of the educational provision and the standards achieved. The relationship with parents is considered to be extremely important and parents contribute effectively to the life of the school in a number of different contexts. There is a system of effective links with parents, most of which are implemented well. There are good procedures for admitting children, including late comers, into the school. The school benefits from strong links with schools in the local cluster, including the secondary school, and there are effective procedures for the standardisation and moderation of assessments.

### **Resource management: Good**

The school manages its resources well. The school has currently sufficient teachers and support staff who are suitably qualified and effective. They work together well and they make an important contribution to the work and life of the school.

The school is clean and tidy and excellent use is made of the site. The governing body keeps a very watchful eye on the budget and ensures that spending matches the SDP requirements and priorities.

Teachers make effective use of their planning, preparation and assessment time and the management of this is good. Teachers have clear responsibilities and expectations. The school has an appropriate arrangement for performance

A Report on Penalltau Welsh-Medium Primary School  
February 2011

management, which offers positive opportunities for continuous professional development.

In view of the progress made by most pupils, the effective learning experiences, good quality teaching and management, the school provides good value for money.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

#### **Responses to parent questionnaires**

14 parent questionnaires were returned and overall most are satisfied or very satisfied with the school. All state that their child has received support to settle down well when they started in the school. All parents believe that the teaching is good and that staff expect their children to work hard. Many believe that home work is appropriate; and all agree that they receive regular information regarding their children's progress. They are all of the opinion that the school helps their children to mature and to accept responsibility, and most agree that the school gives them additional, appropriate support in relation to any individual specific needs. Many feel that they understand the school's arrangements for dealing with complaints, and they all state that there is a good variety of activities, including trips or visits. Most believe that the school is run well. The majority feel that their children have been well prepared for the next stage in their education.

#### **Responses to learner questionnaires**

Of the three pupils in KS2, all completed the questionnaire and the inspection team spoke with pupils as well. All pupils believe that the teachers and other adults help them to learn and to make progress. They state that the school deals well with any bullying and they know to whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. All pupils feel safe in school and agree that there are many opportunities to have regular physical exercise. They all know what to do and with whom to talk if they find the work difficult. All say that they are doing well in the school and they feel their homework helps them to understand their work and improve. 33% disagree that other pupils behave well at playtimes and during lunchtime.

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

|                        |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Dr David Gareth Evans  | Reporting Inspector |
| Mr Brinley Wynne Jones | Team Inspector      |
| Mr Dylan Jones         | Lay Inspector       |
| Mrs Manon Wyn Jones    | Peer Inspector      |
| Mrs Andrea Woods       | School Nominee      |

A Report on Penalltau Welsh-Medium Primary School  
February 2011

## Copies of the report

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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 |