

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Darren-lâs Primary School
Kingcraft Street
CF45 3LT**

School Number: 6742144

Date of Inspection: 05/11/07

by

**Peter Mathias
78829**

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Darren-lâs Primary School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Darren-lâs Primary School took place between 05/11/07 and 07/11/07. An independent team of inspectors, led by Peter Mathias undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings

There are three types of inspection.

For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.

For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.

For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects.

For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects.

Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All nursery schools, special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

This school received a **standard** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Report by Peter Mathias
Darren-lás Primary School, 05/11/07

Context

The nature of the provider

1. Darren-lâs Primary School is situated in Mountain Ash in the Cynon Valley. The Unitary Authority (UA) is Rhondda Cynon Taf. There are 28 children who attend the nursery on a full-time basis and 159 pupils between the ages of five and eleven.
2. The school is situated within a 'Communities First' area. There is a unit for pupils with communication disorders situated in the school. Nearly all of the pupils are from the local area where there is a wide range of backgrounds. A high proportion of pupils are from socially and economically disadvantaged homes. The majority of children enter the nursery with below average levels of basic skills.
3. The school reports that 24% of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is above average for primary schools in the UA and the all-Wales average for primary schools.
4. About 20% of pupils have some degree of special educational needs (SEN). No pupil has a statement of SEN, although two pupils are considered by the UA to have a 'notes in lieu' of a statement of SEN. These are issued by the UA to indicate pupils with significant SEN but who are not in receipt of designated funds. No pupil has the National Curriculum (NC) disapplied. One pupil is looked after by the UA.
5. English is the predominant language of all pupils. No pupil has Welsh as a first language. About 84% of pupils are of Welsh extraction and nearly all of the remainder are of English backgrounds. No pupil has support in English as an additional language.
6. The school was last inspected in the Autumn Term 2001, when the previous headteacher was in post. The school holds the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.
7. During the inspection one permanent member of staff was absent due to ill health. A supply teacher, who had been in the school for some time took her place.

The School's Aims

8. The aims of the school are: -
 - to provide an education which will develop the whole child and to provide them with skills that will enable them to pursue lifelong learning;
 - to create a welcoming ethos where individuals are respected and treated with sensitivity; and
 - to provide pupils with a wide and well balanced range of activities through the curriculum and out of school activities.

The School's Vision Statement is: -

- to give children the best and broadest educational opportunities within a Welsh cultural heritage;
- to equip our children with a good level of basic skills;
- to enthuse our children with a thirst for knowledge;
- to inspire them to reach for the stars.
- to teach 'these souls to fly';
- to have teachers with good in depth subject knowledge;
- to have teachers with a good awareness of individual pupils;
- to have high expectations and a good level of support so that no one is afraid to fail; and
- to help children to develop within a sound and moral framework.

The school's priorities and targets
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9. The school's priorities are targets are to: -

- maintain and improve standards in basic skills, thinking skills, mathematical problems solving, speaking and listening , bilingualism and in information and communications technology (ICT);
- improve facilities for outdoor play;
- improve non-fiction resources for reading;
- develop further foundation phase resources;
- monitor standards and provision;
- carry out building improvements and decorations externally and internally;
- develop the role of the governing body (GB) in monitoring standards in all subjects;
- extend the role of the school council; and
- develop further the school as a community resource.

Summary

10. Darren-lâs is a good school which is well led. It has made good progress since its last inspection.

Table of grades awarded

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

11. The inspection team agrees with all but one of the seven judgements made by the school about the standards pupils achieve and the other areas of its work.
12. Overall the standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning inspected are as follows: -

Pupils' standards of achievement	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	8%	73%	19%	0%	0%

13. Standards of achievement in lessons are good with no important shortcomings. These figures are above the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) all-Wales target of 98% to be at least Grade 3 and 65% to be Grade 2 or better and compares to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) latest report. These figures are higher than those found at the time of the last inspection.

Subjects and areas of learning for under fives

	Nursery	Reception
Language, literacy and communication	2	2
Personal and social development	2	2
Mathematical development	2	2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	2	2
Physical development	2	2
Creative development	2	2

14. The overall quality of educational provision for the under fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
15. Pupils with SEN achieve well and make good progress as a result of the good provision for them.

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Area	KS1 Grade	KS2 Grade
Mathematics	2	2
Information technology	3	2
History	2	2
Music	2	2
Physical education	2	2

16. In the end of KS1 assessments for seven year olds in 2007, starting from a below average base, the proportion of pupils achieving at least the expected level (Level 2) was above the local and national averages in English, mathematics and science. The combined results were above the national and local averages. In these assessments boys did not attain as well as girls in English and mathematics. In science both boys and girls attained very high results.
17. When compared to those schools in the local area with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the school's results were well above those similar schools in English and science and above most of those schools in mathematics. The combined results were well above those similar schools.
18. In the 2007 national assessments for eleven year olds, the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected level (Level 4) in English and mathematics were just below the local and national averages. In science results were above these averages. When compared with schools in the UA with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, results in English and mathematics were below those similar schools. In science results are above. The combined results are below those similar schools. Girls outperformed boys in these assessments. Since 2004, the trend of improvement has been positive. In 2007 the school met its targets agreed with the UA.

19. Care should be taken in interpreting these results because they include pupils from the Unit who often have well below average starting points. These pupils often achieve well for them but below most pupils of seven years of age. Pupils' standards and progress in the key skills are Grade 2 (Good features and no important shortcomings). In KS1 and KS2 pupils' standards and progress in English in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing are Grade 2. Pupils speak confidently and listen carefully. Pupils' reading skills are well developed and are used successfully in a wide range of activities. Pupils present their work carefully and write neatly for a range of reasons.
20. Pupils' skills in communication in Welsh and their bilingual skills are Grade 3 (good features outweigh shortcomings). They have only limited ability to speak and write in Welsh and to use English and Welsh naturally during their daily lives in school.
21. In both KS1 and KS2, pupils' skills in applying their knowledge in mathematics are Grade 2. They measure carefully when collecting data or when making things in design technology. Their skills in information and communications technology (ICT) are Grade 2 overall. However, in KS1 these skills are Grade 3. Older pupils in this key stage do not confidently use simple programs to learn effectively in other subjects.
22. Pupils' understanding of the significant features of their Welsh heritage is Grade 2 as are their personal and social skills and their problem solving skills. In both key stages their creative skills are also Grade 2 and pupils express themselves confidently in art, music and dance. They work well together and with adults. They share resources and ideas maturely. However, most pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of what they need to do to improve their work in the shorter term.
23. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes towards learning are good and the school is a happy, supportive and welcoming community. Pupils participate willingly in their lessons. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with no important shortcomings. Attendance rates over the last three terms are 92% which is below the WAG target for 2007.

The quality of education and training

Grades for teaching

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6%	79%	15%	0%	0%

24. The quality of teaching is good with no important shortcomings. In the lessons seen the overall percentage of Grade 1 and Grade 2 lessons is close to the national picture reported by HMCI in her Annual Report 2005/2006. Nationally the quality of teaching is at least good in 79% with 17% having outstanding features.

25. In the nursery and reception, teachers plan and organise well for their children and ensure that a wide range of interesting, appropriate, well-organised activities are provided for them.
26. Across the school in the best lessons, good and outstanding features include: -
- high expectations of pupils' behaviour;
 - careful planning so that pupils built systematically on what they already know and can do;
 - detailed explanations of what should be achieved in the time available;
 - very well taken opportunities to develop pupils' bilingual skills;
 - very dramatic introductions which hold pupils' attention for long periods;
 - very good subject knowledge; and
 - close attention to ensuring all pupils are fully involved in the lessons.
27. In the lessons where teaching had some shortcomings these were: -
- slow starts to lessons and pupils under challenged;
 - insufficient explanation of what pupils should aim to achieve;
 - lack of support for pupils who are not sure what to do next;
 - missed opportunities to develop pupils' bilingual skills; and
 - work not well matched to the abilities of all of the pupils.
28. The quality of longer-term assessment is good with no important shortcomings. The school's procedures for recording, reporting and assessment meet statutory requirements in full. In the best lessons teachers mark pupils' work well so that pupils have a clear idea about what they need to do in the shorter term to improve. However, this practice is not consistently followed across the school. The school is assembling collections of pupils work to indicate the standards pupils should achieve year on year. However many of these collections are incomplete. Reports to parents meet statutory requirements and are of a good quality. Pupils with SEN are assessed regularly and their needs are addressed well.
29. The education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils well and the curriculum is broad and balanced. It is accessible to all pupils including those with SEN and disabilities. It meets the legal requirements of the NC and the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. There is a wide range of out of school activities many of which help pupils to appreciate the value of healthy lifestyles and physical exercise. All of these activities are well supported by pupils.
30. Arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are effective. Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on moral concepts and to develop a sense of awe and wonder. Collective acts of worship meet legal requirements. It provides good opportunities for pupils to be made aware of the cultural traditions and history of Wales and also those of other countries and societies. The school provides many good opportunities for pupils to learn to take on responsibilities and to make decisions.

31. Links with parents, the local community and other agencies are very well developed. There is a strong commitment to work related education. Links with industry are well established. The school promotes equal opportunities well and positively discourages pupils from forming stereotypical views of peoples and their cultures. Their understanding of global citizenship and the need to conserve the earth's resources are well developed. They are fully involved in promoting and following a healthy eating program.
32. The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Pupils work and play in a happy, supportive environment where they feel secure and valued. The school ensures that all pupils, including those with SEN are equally valued and included. The provision for those with SEN is good with no important shortcomings. Those in the unit are well supported by a closely-knit team who successfully help them to play a full part in the life of the school. The requirements of the Code of Practice for SEN are met in full.
33. There are clear and well documented arrangements which contribute effectively to pupils' well being. These include policies and procedures to review pupils' attendance, punctuality, behaviour and performance. The provision for ensuring pupils' well being, including child protection arrangements, are comprehensive. There are good policies and practices to promote race equality, disability, discrimination and equal opportunities. There is an accessibility plan in place based upon a survey of the site, which allows for access to nearly all parts of the school for the physically disabled.

Leadership and management

34. The school is well led and efficiently managed. The headteacher provides a pragmatic and effective lead to the school. Staff morale is high and the roles of the deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators are well established. They carry out their duties efficiently and effectively. Across the school, all staff show a strong determination for pupils to achieve well and to have equal access to what is taught. There is a clear focus on raising standards through a careful analysis of pupils' longer-term progress. The senior management team and subject co-ordinators look rigorously at first hand at the impact of teaching and learning.
35. The school takes careful account of national priorities and local initiatives. The breakfast club is well supported and it helps to promote pupils' awareness of healthy diets and lifestyles. There are very strong links with the local community. The school council and eco-committee are active. Preparation for the introduction of the Foundation Phase is well advanced. Arrangements to provide teachers with time during the taught week to plan, prepare and assess are effective and well managed. Environmental and ecological issues are given appropriate emphasis. There are close links with the local secondary school and with other schools and institutions in the area. However the arrangements to promote pupils' bilingual skills are not put into practice consistently across the school.

36. The governing body meets its legal requirements and statutory duties in full. The chair of governors provides a very positive lead and is heavily committed to the school. Many governors are well informed about the day-to-day life of the school. However they are not sufficiently engaged in setting the longer-term strategic direction of the school and in judging the outcomes of their decisions. Financial management is secure and well adapted to the school's needs.
37. The process of self-evaluation is detailed and rigorous. There are good arrangements for the headteacher and the professional staff to look closely at the work of the school and to provide secure evidence to support their judgements. There are extensive procedures in place for teachers to review pupils' performance over time and to provide suitable support when necessary.
38. The self-evaluation report is closely linked to the school development plan (SDP) and to arrangements for the performance management of staff. It forms an accurate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is a sound basis for future development.
39. Since the last inspection in November 2001, the school has made good progress. The key issues of that inspection have by and large been well addressed.
40. There is a good provision of teaching and support staff to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Day-to-day administration is very efficient and the school runs smoothly. All staff are well trained and deployed effectively. The accommodation, although old, is generally in good order. Some parts of the school have been recently re-developed and refurbished. Other areas are in need of similar improvement. Overall the school is well maintained and is clean. There are many colourful displays and attractive exhibits. There is sufficient space and resources for the needs of all pupils on roll. Resources for teaching are of a good quality and are readily available.
41. Bearing in mind the overall good quality of education provided and the progress of pupils, often from below average starting points, the school gives good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school in the areas inspected, the staff and governing body need to: -

- R1 raise standards in subjects and key skills where they are Grade 3;
- R2 strengthen the school's systems for assessing pupils' progress and achievements in the short-term and in using that information to indicate what pupils should do next;
- R3 complete the process in all subjects of assembling annotated collections of pupils' work to indicate the standards pupils should achieve year on year; and *
- R4 review and clarify the scheme of work in mathematics to ensure that all pupils build systematically on what they already know and can do.

* The school has identified this as a priority.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 42. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
- 43. Pupils' standards of achievement in the lessons observed in the subjects identified for inspection are as follows: -

Pupils' standards of achievement	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	8%	73%	19%	0%	0%

- 44. Pupils' standards of achievement in these lessons are above the WAG all-Wales target of 98% to be at least Grade 3 and 65% to be Grade 2 or better. These figures compare to HMCI's latest report and are higher than at the last inspection.

45. Generally children begin in the nursery with below average levels of basic skills. The overall quality of the educational provision for children under five is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

Subjects and areas of learning for under fives

	Nursery	Reception
Language, literacy and communication	2	2
Personal and social development	2	2
Mathematical development	2	2
Knowledge and understanding of the world	2	2
Physical development	2	2
Creative development	2	2

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Area	KS1	KS2
	Grade	Grade
Mathematics	2	2
Information technology	3	2
History	2	2
Music	2	2
Physical education	2	2

46. In the 2007 national assessments for seven year olds in English, mathematics and science, results were above the local and national averages in all three subjects. When these results were combined the results of those achieving at least Level 2 were above the local and national averages. Particular strengths were the high proportion of pupils achieving the higher level (Level 3), in English and science and the fact that all pupils achieved the expected level in science. In these assessments boys attained below the standards reached by girls in English and mathematics and the same in science.
47. When compared to schools in the UA with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the results in 2007 were well above these similar schools in English and science and above most of these schools in mathematics. The combined results were also well above these similar schools. Since 2004 results have improved.
48. In the end of KS2 national assessments for eleven year olds in 2007 the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected level (Level 4) in English and mathematics are just below the local and national averages. In science results are above these averages. When the results in these subjects are combined, the school achieves in line with the local average and just below the national average. In English an above average proportion of pupils achieved the higher level (Level 5). In mathematics a below average proportion of pupils achieved this level. In science the results for Level 5 were in line with most schools nationally and locally.

49. When the results of eleven year olds are compared with schools in the UA with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, results in English and mathematics are below most of these similar schools. In science results are above these schools. When the results of all three subjects are combined, the overall results are below those similar schools. In these assessments girls out perform boys as they have done for some years.
50. Taking into account children's skills and experiences when they start in the nursery and their performance when they were assessed at the age of seven, many pupils achieve well and make good progress. There are also some pupils who join the school in KS2 because of their additional learning needs. These pupils often achieve well for them but below most eleven year olds. Overall, pupils with SEN achieve well and make progress as a result of the good provision for them. In 2007 the school met or exceeded the targets agreed with the UA.
51. Pupils' overall development of key skills is Grade 2 (good features and no important shortcomings). In KS1 and KS2, pupils' standards and progress in English in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing are Grade 2. Pupils in both KS1 and KS2 speak confidently and clearly. They ask and answer questions enthusiastically. In both key stages they listen attentively and concentrate well. They read reasonably fluently bearing in mind their different ages and starting points. They enjoy reading for information and use the Internet and reference books readily, for example in geography and in history. In a wide range of activities they take a pride in presenting their work neatly, for example when writing for a wide range of reasons and in different styles.
52. Pupils' achievements in communication in Welsh are Grade 3 (good features outweigh shortcomings). Across the school they have only a basic understanding of how to speak, listen, read and write in Welsh. They understand simple commands and greetings and respond appropriately to them. Older pupils know the Welsh names for the main parts of the body and the clothes they wear. However, they lack the knowledge and skills to speak and write in extended sentences. Their bilingual skills are also Grade 3. In both KS1 and KS2 they are only just beginning to use both Welsh and English naturally in their lessons and in their daily lives in school.
53. In both KS1 and KS2, pupils' mathematical skills in other subjects are Grade 2. They use and apply their mathematical skills well to sequence and to order information. They measure accurately in science and in design technology. They interpret information they collect in a wide range of graphs.
54. Pupils' skills in ICT are Grade 2 overall, but in KS1 standards are Grade 3. This is because older pupils in particular in this key stage are at a very early stage of using simple programs confidently to learn effectively in other subjects. Within KS2 they use ICT effectively to draft, edit and print, and to make presentations of their work, for example in history and geography.
55. Pupils' understanding of the richness of their Welsh culture is Grade 2. They are familiar with their local history and with the traditions and legends of

Wales. They have a good knowledge of some Welsh artists, composers and musicians.

56. Pupils' personal skills are Grade 2. They behave sensibly and show constructive attitudes to each other. Boys and girls co-operate readily and treat each other with consideration. They share resources and ideas easily with each other and with adults.
57. Pupils' problem solving skills are Grade 2. In KS1 and KS2, they think things out for themselves. They respond well to teachers' searching questions and find solutions to those questions quickly and accurately.
58. Pupils' creative skills are Grade 2 in both key stages. They express themselves confidently in art, music and dance. They illustrate their work well using a wide range of media and materials.
59. Pupils in both key stages work well together and with adults. However, across the school most pupils do not consistently have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and how to take the small steps necessary to make progress. This key skill is Grade 3 in both key stages.
60. A clear code of conduct exists throughout the school and pupils understand what is expected of them. They are aware of the consequences imposed for inappropriate behaviour and appreciate the need for class and school rules, which they perceive as fair. Pupils are friendly, sociable and relate well to staff, visitors and each other.
61. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and play. They listen carefully, co-operate willingly with staff and their fellow pupils, settle quickly to tasks and sustain concentration to the best of their ability.
62. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes towards learning are good and the school is a happy, supportive and welcoming community. The headteacher and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and on the few occasions when standards of behaviour fall below expectations, they handle situations firmly, quietly and calmly.
63. The recent 'Playground Pals' initiative is proving very successful. Older pupils act as helpers and befrienders to other children in the playground. They undertake their duties conscientiously and act responsibly. They make a positive contribution to the good order that exists in the playground.
64. Attendance rates for the past three terms average 92%. These rates fall below the attendance target of less than seven per cent absence set by the WAG for 2007. The school is working diligently to improve attendance rates but is hampered by the number of parents who withdraw their children for holidays during term time.
65. Most pupils are punctual and keen to attend school. Registration is conducted efficiently and the school complies with attendance requirements set out in the WAG Circular 3/99.

66. Pupils develop the capacity to work independently, in pairs and as part of a group. They organise group activities fairly. They help and positively support each other to make sure everyone contributes.
67. Pupils' personal, social, moral and wider development is good. The supportive ethos of the school, the positive relationships between staff and pupils and the sensitive moral and spiritual elements of collective worship provide pupils with a solid set of values to guide them.
68. In discussion, pupils demonstrate a secure awareness of equal opportunities issues and feel strongly that everyone should be treated fairly and without discrimination. They are developing an appreciation of the diverse nature of society, and express particular pleasure in being part of a school that welcomes and includes pupils with a variety of additional needs.
69. The school is highly successful in preparing pupils to take an active role in the life and work of the local community. Governors, staff and pupils are fully committed to the local community and the school participates in many aspects of community life. Exemplary use is made of the community as a learning resource and pupils regularly serve the community by supporting many civic, cultural, environmental and charitable projects. The school is at the heart of the Darrenlas area and is valued greatly by the people it serves.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

70. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
71. The quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6%	79%	15%	0%	0%

72. The quality of teaching is good or better that is Grade 1 or Grade 2 in 85% of lessons. The quality of teaching is outstanding that is Grade 1 in 6% of lessons. Nationally as reported by HMCI in her report (2005/2006) the quality of teaching in primary schools is at least Grade 2 in 79% of lessons with 17% having outstanding features.
73. In the nursery and reception classes teachers effectively plan and organise a wide range of suitable and stimulating activities and learning experiences so that children settle into the nursery well and make good progress, often from below average starting points.
74. Across the school, teachers show high expectations of their pupils' behaviour. They plan so that their lessons build systematically on what pupils already know and can do. Teachers often, but not always, explain carefully and clearly what the objectives of the lessons are. They explain in detail how much time pupils have to complete the different tasks expected of them. Pupils begin their work eagerly because they know that their efforts are warmly recognised.
75. In the small number of outstanding lessons, teachers demonstrate very clearly what is expected of their pupils so that in a physical education lesson for example, all have a clear picture of the shapes and positions they should strive to copy. Teachers take every available opportunity to extend pupils' bilingual skills by questioning and by encouraging vigorously in both languages. They have very high expectations of their pupils and remind them regularly of what they should achieve.
76. In the best lessons, teachers increase the level of challenge skilfully so that all pupils achieve well throughout the lessons. They make their lessons come to life through very carefully organised introductions which are very dramatic. For example, in a history lesson the teacher very successfully encouraged pupils to have an immediate empathy with a local tragedy which took place a century before. In these lessons teachers show very good subject knowledge and pass this on successfully to their pupils. They ensure that all pupils are treated equally and have the same opportunities to learn. They ensure that all

pupils including those from the unit are fully involved in the lessons and are well supported by their assistants.

77. Where teaching has some shortcomings, the lessons begin slowly and pupils are under-challenged. Work is not well matched to the different abilities in the classes. Pupils who do not understand what is expected of them wait for long periods for the help they need and their time is not used well. Teachers do not make the objectives of the lessons clear and are too ready to accept second best. They miss opportunities to develop pupils' bilingual skills.
78. The school's procedures for assessment recording and reporting meet statutory requirements in full. There are robust systems in place to evaluate results from test data and to ensure teachers use results to set future targets for improvement. In some but not all subjects teachers use animated collections of pupils' work to judge standards pupils should achieve. However, these are incomplete in most subjects.
79. Teachers regularly identify learning objectives to be assessed and review the assessments undertaken. However the quality of these evaluations is inconsistent. In some year groups future planning does not take account of this information. As a result pupils are not always appropriately challenged.
80. The quality of marking has good features which outweigh shortcomings. In the best examples, teachers and pupils share in the marking process. Teachers set clear targets for improvement, and pupils reflect on how they think they can improve their work. However, this practice is not used consistently across the school. As a result some pupils are not aware of the small steps they need to take to improve their work.
81. Reports to parents meet legal requirements. In English, mathematics and science they clearly set out for parents what their children have learned and how well they have achieved.
82. In some other subjects the reports lack this detail and do not give parents an evaluation of how much progress their child has made. In some year groups it merely describes what pupils have been taught rather than what they have learned. Insufficient emphasis is given to sharing with parents what their children need to do to improve in the shorter term.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

83. The findings of the inspection team did not match the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report. This is because the school underestimated by one grade the quality of the learning experiences it provides.
84. The school responds well to pupils' aspirations and caters for the whole range of pupils' needs including those with SEN, the gifted and pupils with English as an additional language.
85. The curriculum is broad, balanced and flexible. All pupils have equal access to it. It is carefully organised so that pupils learn systematically and build upon what they already know, understand and can do. It meets the statutory requirements of the NC and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education in full.
86. The curriculum for the under fives is well organised. A wide range of exciting experiences are provided which stimulate children's interest and enjoyment in the six areas of learning. Clear, consistent routines provide a safe, secure environment.
87. Recent review and revision of schemes of work have improved the quality of curriculum planning. Both KS1 and KS2 provide exciting experiences in many aspects of the curriculum, particularly in KS2 in history, in order to stimulate the children in order to achieve higher standards. This is a good feature. However the scheme of work for mathematics does not provide sufficient clear guidance to teachers on what they should teach and when, bearing in mind the wide range of ages in each mathematics group.
88. There are appropriate policies in place for each subject in the NC and religious education. Planning for key skills across the curriculum has improved. Most of these are now planned for and used consistently. However, pupils' skills in the use of Welsh and in bilingualism are not developed systematically.
89. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and out of school activities, which enrich pupils' experiences and raise their self-esteem and confidence. The good variety of clubs, such as orchestra, recorders, netball, rugby, football, art competitions, concerts, visits to eisteddfods all provide pupils with good opportunities to improve and extend their talents.
90. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal and social education (PSE). Learning experiences successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They have a good appreciation of ownership and responsibility towards the school and the environment and have opportunities to reflect on moral concepts as part of the ethos of the school and to recognise the existence of larger forces than themselves.

91. Social and moral development is good. Pupils are very caring towards one another through the everyday running of the school. Social development is enhanced through opportunities to take responsibility and collaborate through the school council and in taking part in charitable events.
92. Pupils' cultural development is good. Their awareness of other cultures is successfully promoted for example, through the displays throughout the school and in music from different countries. Collective worship meets legal requirements. Assemblies give a strong sense of community.
93. The school's partnerships with parents, the local community, other schools and higher education institutions are highly successful and have outstanding features. They enrich the life and work of the school and enhance pupils' learning experiences.
94. Parents are very supportive of the school, value its welcoming nature and appreciate the ready access they have to the headteacher and staff. Together they and friends of the school make a good contribution to its life and work. They give freely of their time accompanying pupils on educational visits, fundraising through the Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) and supporting school activities.
95. Communication between school and home is well established and effective. A constructive home/school agreement including provision for homework is in place. This is well supported by parents.
96. The school has a strong working partnership with other schools in its area and with the secondary school to which pupils transfer. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils are good and ensure that Y6 pupils look forward to secondary school with confidence. Darren-lâs has a pro-active approach to developing its partnership with the secondary school and a number of innovative and dynamic links are in place. These contribute not only to the continuity and progression of education from KS2 to KS3 but also to pupils' emotional and personal well being as they move on to the next stage of their education.
97. The school regularly welcomes students from local secondary schools and colleges who undertake vocational and child-care qualifications. Students are well supported by staff and they make a positive contribution to the school.
98. The school's partnership with the local community is outstanding. Staff take full advantage of all that the community has to offer to broaden and extend the learning experiences of pupils. The school and its various activities are very well supported and valued by the local community.
99. The school's commitment to work-related education is good. A range of productive partnerships enriches pupils' learning with local employers and relevant agencies, including the Education and Business Partnership (EBP).

100. Teachers successfully address the vocational aspect of the PSE programme and a range of well planned visits to commercial and retail sites enhances pupils' understanding of the world of work. With the help of a local journalist, pupils produce their own good quality newspaper.
101. Several teachers have undertaken relevant, short business placements that have enriched curriculum provision for pupils and enhanced professional development.
102. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is well promoted throughout the school and the school has a positive Welsh ethos. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their knowledge of the culture and heritage of Wales and their understanding of the locality is good. The provision for the development of pupils' bilingual skills is inconsistent throughout the school. Children in the early years make good progress in developing their bilingual skills but older pupils often lack confidence to use the Welsh incidentally during the day.
103. The headteacher and staff are successful in tackling social disadvantage, and challenging stereotyping. The school works in close partnerships with a range of external welfare agencies to secure the best possible support for children and their families. The school is heavily committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all.
104. The standards in, and provision for education for sustainable development and global citizenship are good and this is a developing area of the school's curriculum. Pupils understand the need to care for their environment and are aware of the problems caused by litter and pollution. They are actively involved in recycling and composting schemes and in enhancing the school grounds and local environment.
105. Pupils' understanding of global citizenship is progressing well. Through their work in geography and religious education, pupils are aware of the lives of children in other parts of the world and how global forces shape their lives.
106. The school acts in a sustainable way by reducing energy and water consumption and in minimising waste. For example, the installation of double-glazed windows throughout the school has done much to reduce heat loss. The school has received the Eco-Schools bronze award in recognition of its commitment to conservation and the environment.
107. Pupils' entrepreneurial skills are developing well. They take part in competitions sponsored by business and relevant agencies, help run the fruit tuck shop and older ones design, make and market their own confectionary.
108. Pupils have regular opportunities to enhance their problem-solving and decision-making skills as they contribute to the school council, eco committee and playground pals' initiative.
109. The school is fully committed to the national priorities for lifelong learning and community regeneration. The 'wrap around' provision offered to children

through the breakfast club and the range of after-school activities is greatly valued by families.

110. The school is very much involved in activities aimed to regenerate the local community. The working relationships forged with a range of agencies and personnel, including 'Communities First' and the 'Darrenlas Residents Association', are very strong and of great benefit to children and their families.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

111. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
112. The school places a high priority on the pastoral care of pupils and provides good care, guidance and support for all pupils. The headteacher and staff know and understand their pupils well and effectively monitor and support their educational progress, their social development and their personal welfare.
113. The school makes good use of support services and manages care arrangements effectively to ensure pupils' needs are met in a sensitive manner. This is particularly beneficial for children in challenging and vulnerable circumstances. Outstanding features include the way in which the school adopts a multi-agency approach to providing pastoral care and the close teamwork that exists between the school and external agencies.
114. The school has developed effective working partnerships with parents and carers, which contribute significantly to the quality of support and guidance offered to pupils. The school listens carefully to the views of parents and carers and often acts upon their recommendations.
115. The school's arrangements for the induction of pupils are successful. The youngest children in the nursery settle well and staff offer good pastoral care. Arrangements for moving up classes are well established and effective and ensure pupils settle quickly into their new environments. The close working partnerships with personnel from the 'On Track' and 'Communities First' initiatives, which support the transition to secondary school, are highly beneficial to pupils.
116. Pupils work and play in a happy, supportive environment where they are secure and valued by staff. The quality of relationships throughout the school is good and this contributes significantly to pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
117. Pupils have access to an effective personal and social education programme, in line with national recommendations, which contributes significantly to the quality of support and guidance offered to pupils. Discussion time, in

particular, has a positive impact on pupils' emotional, personal and social development.

118. The school council is a good forum for the development of pupils' personal and social skills and provides a good opportunity for pupils of different ages to work together. School councillors undertake their duties conscientiously and feel they can make a real difference to their school.
119. Good procedures are in place to monitor pupils' behaviour, performance, attendance and punctuality and early intervention ensures that any individual concerns are dealt with quickly and efficiently.
120. Effective procedures are in place to encourage good attendance and punctuality, to ensure pupils' absence is adequately explained and to follow up situations where necessary. Regular liaison takes place with the education welfare officer (EWO).
121. The school's policies and procedures to promote good behaviour are effective. Teachers successfully implement a range of positive strategies to secure good behaviour. They work hard to encourage pupils to understand, manage and develop their standards of behaviour to the best of their abilities.
122. The school works in close partnership with the behaviour support team from the local authority to help pupils whose behaviour gives cause for concern and who may be at risk of exclusion. In these rare cases arrangements work well and with extra support, pupils' behaviour usually improves.
123. The school has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and well being of pupils, which are monitored carefully by staff and the governing body. Pupils are well supervised, and arrangements for dealing with accidents and emergencies are clearly understood by staff.
124. As part of the 'Welsh Network of Healthy Schools', the school is successful in promoting healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are encouraged to eat only fruit at break time, and fresh water is readily available throughout the school day. Pupils also benefit from a range of extra-curricular sports clubs, which are well supported.
125. The headteacher, staff and governors work in pupils' best interests to safeguard their welfare and to ensure that they are adequately protected. The school has an appropriate policy and procedures to deal with child protection issues. The headteacher has designated responsibility for child protection and ensures that all adults in the school are aware of the correct procedures to be followed and that training is regularly updated.
126. The quality of provision for pupils with additional needs is good with no important shortcomings. The school's policy for SEN, a cluster based policy for Mountain Ash Schools, is comprehensive and fully complies with the SEN Code of Practice. Throughout the school, teachers, support staff and outside

agencies work as a team and Individual Education Plans (IEP's) are well managed.

127. The process of SEN assessment is well managed by the SEN co-ordinator (SENCo). Good support is given to teachers and to learning support assistants to ensure IEPs are delivered appropriately to meet the learning needs of pupils. The SENCo routinely monitors and evaluates these to measure impact and progress for pupils with SEN.
128. Both pupils and parents are involved in all stages of SEN assessment. Individual or group IEPs are appropriately detailed and allow every child to access all parts of the curriculum. While there are no pupils with statements of SEN, there are two pupils who are considered by the UA to have 'notes in lieu' of a statement of SEN. These pupils are supported very well.
129. Pupils in the Communication Disorder Unit are well taught and make good progress. The teacher and learning support assistant work very effectively as a team to ensure pupils are supported and taught with empathy and compassion and are well integrated into lessons where this is appropriate.
130. The school has effective strategies to encourage good behaviour and to encourage all pupils to comply with the school behaviour policy. All staff have received training in handling disruptive behaviour. Strategies are well used throughout the school.
131. A few pupils are helped by outside agencies. The support these pupils receive is of a high quality and is well used.
132. The quality of the school's provision for equal opportunities is consistently good with no important shortcomings. The school recognises the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and all pupils are treated equally and with care and respect. The school's policy for equal opportunities is implemented effectively and a high priority is given to the inclusion of all pupils.
133. The school successfully challenges stereotypes and promotes gender equality. This is particularly evident in role-play activities in the early years and in mixed-gender group activities in lessons throughout the school. Pupils have equal access to the curriculum and other facilities within the school.
134. Good race relations are promoted successfully through the overall supportive and caring nature of the school, through aspects of personal and social education and through the school's policies and procedures. The school recognises, respects and celebrates diversity.
135. All reasonable efforts are made to secure the equal treatment of disabled pupils. For example, a ramp has been installed to aid access to the upper building. Toilet facilities for the disabled are now available in both buildings. However, because of the nature of the site there remain some difficulties for the disabled in gaining full access to all areas of the school. An accessibility

audit has been recently undertaken. A plan has been put into place to make improvements in access to the curriculum, and to all buildings.

136. There are effective measures in place to eliminate oppressive behaviour including racial discrimination, bullying and all other forms of harassment. Such incidents are rare and the school functions well as a caring community where all pupils, including those with specific learning needs are valued equally.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

137. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
138. The headteacher provides a thoughtful and effective lead to the work of the school. The school has moved forward significantly since her appointment three years ago. Areas for improvement have been accurately identified and pragmatically addressed.
139. The roles of the deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators have been strengthened so that they are effectively deployed and are working hard to raise standards further. Range of new initiatives have had positive effects for example, in improving the provision of resources for information technology and in making the buildings and hard play areas clean and attractive. Staff morale is high and all work together well as a supportive team. All staff have high aspirations for their pupils.
140. There are detailed and effective arrangements in place to assess pupils' longer-term progress and to judge whether or not pupils are making the progress it would be reasonable to expect of them. There are well used strategies in place to identify individual pupils who are not achieving as well as they might and to focus additional support on them.
141. The school takes careful account of national priorities and local initiatives. There is a popular breakfast club, which forms a part of the active way in which the school promotes an awareness of healthy diets and lifestyles. There are strong links with the local community including the Communities First initiative. The school council and eco-council are actively improving pupils' understanding of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society and in increasing pupils' awareness of the need to protect and improve the environment. Ecological and environmental issues are well covered.
142. Preparation for the introduction of the Foundation Phase is well advanced. The school is well placed to introduce this initiative. Arrangements during the taught week to plan, prepare and assess are effectively managed. There are strong links with the secondary school and with other schools in the area,

which include other providers of education and training. However the arrangements to promote pupils' bilingual skills are underdeveloped. The policy is not applied with sufficient consistency and rigour across the school.

143. There are extensive and constructive arrangements in place which are well used to enable the senior management team and subject co-ordinators to look at first hand at the quality of teaching and learning and to judge the success of initiatives they are pursuing. This information is well used to determine future training needs. Performance management procedures are carefully managed and firmly embedded into the culture of the school. There are appropriate arrangements to support newly qualified teachers and teachers who are new to the school.
144. Governors meet their legal responsibilities and statutory duties in full. They positively support the senior management. The chair of governors is very constructive and provides a committed lead to other governors. The chair of governors holds the headteacher and professional staff positively and constructively to account. However, while many governors are very well informed about the day-to-day life of the school, they lack the experience to set formally the longer-term strategic direction for the school and to judge the school's progress towards it.
145. The school's financial management is well organised and appropriately focused on its real needs. Governors are well informed about the school's performance in the national assessments.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

146. The findings of the inspection team matched the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
147. The process of gathering information about the performance of the school; and in identifying the school's strengths and areas for development is detailed and rigorous. It is based on carefully constructed arrangements for the headteacher and other professional staff to look closely at their areas of responsibility in order to identify secure evidence to support their views of where the school has strengths and weaknesses.
148. The headteacher and teachers carefully review pupils' performance and identify where pupils need additional support and how well pupils learn. Governors have been appropriately involved at the discussion stage in drawing up the self-evaluation report and in agreeing the grades awarded to each of the key questions.
149. The self-evaluation report is clear and well set out. It is closely linked to other plans for school improvement, including the SDP which is accurately focused

on the needs of the school. It provides a realistic basis to bring about improvements. It takes appropriate note of national and local priorities. There are good arrangements to relate the priorities set out in the SDP to the school's performance management programme and to the school's overall budget.

150. The inspection team agrees with the school's identification of its strengths and areas for improvement. The inspection team also agrees with nearly all of the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation. The school underestimated by one grade the quality of the learning experiences it provides.
151. Since the last inspection in the Autumn Term 2001, the school has made good progress overall in addressing the key issues of that inspection. Standards in the subjects inspected which were Grade 3 previously have improved. The provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is much better now than it was. These areas are bright, well decorated and resourced effectively. There is now a well equipped information technology base.
152. Teachers' planning is now detailed and in most cases teachers explain clearly to their pupils the objectives of their lessons. Most but not all of the key skills for learning are well developed. There are some significant shortcomings in pupils' use of incidental Welsh and in their bilingual confidence. Assessment procedures for judging pupils' progress in the shorter term, do not consistently give sufficient information to indicate what pupils should aim to do next. As a result, pupils are not sufficiently aware of what they need to do to improve.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

153. The findings of the inspection matched the judgement made by the school in the self-evaluation report.
154. The school has a good provision of teaching staff to support the number of pupils on roll. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and they have detailed job descriptions, which identify their curricular responsibilities. There are appropriate and well used arrangements to provide teachers with time during the taught week to plan, prepare and assess.
155. Good use is made of the classroom support staff who work closely and efficiently with the teaching staff. They are deployed well and make a significant contribution to classroom activities, particularly when supporting pupils with SEN.
156. Day-to-day administration is very efficient and the school runs smoothly. Midday supervisors, canteen staff, cleaning staff and the caretaker perform their duties effectively and efficiently. The building is generally in good order and kept very clean.

157. Learning resources are of a good quality and meet the needs of the curriculum. The completion of a modern ICT suite in KS2 has made a significant impact on the standards in the skills of these pupils.
158. Across the school displays and exhibits are of a high quality and are attractive. The updated and redecorated Infant building provides a fresh, stimulating, learning environment for the pupils. The outdoor area is limited but good use is made of the facilities.
159. Overall, bearing in mind the quality of education provided and the progress pupils make, often from below average starting points, the school provides good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Under 5s

160. In the nursery and reception classes the overall quality of the education provided for the under fives is appropriate to their needs and children make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

Language, literacy and communication skills

Nursery: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
Reception: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

161. In the nursery and reception classes children make bright and lively responses to their teachers. They listen carefully and speak confidently to each other and to adults. They remember and re-tell their favourite stories and begin to develop their vocabularies in Welsh as well as in English when they respond to questions and instructions. They take turns to speak clearly and audibly using appropriate tone and expression.
162. Children in both the nursery and reception enjoy sharing books and are interested in what they contain, for example when hearing about the 'Selfish Giant'. Reception children make good progress in recognising the sounds which letters make and readily pick out the words which begin with the same sounds.
163. In the nursery children follow an outline when beginning to develop their writing skills. They know that 'mark making' conveys meaning. Older pupils in reception develop their writing skills well. They write their own sentences independently and 'read' them accurately.

Shortcomings

164. There are no important shortcomings.

Personal and social development

Nursery: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Reception: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

165. In the nursery and reception children achieve good standards and make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. They make good progress in showing care, respect and concern for others.
166. Nursery children form positive relationships with each other when playing together and when sharing their healthy snacks. They settle quickly into school routines and behave sensibly towards each other. From an early stage in the nursery, they become independent when choosing an activity or resource, for example when playing in the home corner. They are beginning to take responsibility for their personal hygiene. They dress themselves confidently.
167. In the reception, children have a good understanding of what makes for a healthy diet. They know that fruit is good for you. They carry out tasks willingly and are eager to take on responsibilities. They know that there are different cultures and celebrations amongst the people of the world. For example, they celebrate the Jewish festival of Hanukkah and their own harvest festival.

Shortcomings

168. There are no important shortcomings.

Mathematical development

Nursery: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Reception: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

169. In the nursery children recognise the odd one out in a series of three objects. They match simple shapes by different criteria. They recognise small numbers arranged as symbols. They know the names of simple shapes in English and Welsh. They count on and back accurately within 10.
170. In the reception children copy a repeated pattern and they know the names of two-dimensional and three dimensional shapes and build larger interlocking structures with them. They use money when buying and selling in the shop. They measure ingredients carefully when making cakes. They enjoy mathematical games and most count, order and sequence numbers both forwards and backwards to 20. They understand mathematical terms such as

more and less, long and short and full and empty. They use computer games successfully to reinforce their work in number.

Shortcomings

171. There are no important shortcomings.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Nursery: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Reception: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

172. Nursery children talk confidently about themselves and their families. They know that they have changed considerably since they were small. They know the important events in the lives of their families. They are aware of the change in weather and of the need to dress appropriately for it.
173. They observe plants and flowers growing and how a caterpillar moves. They know that all living things need water and light to grow. They talk about where they live and their immediate area. They know that the seasons change.
174. Children in the reception experiment with cooking materials when making jellies and crispy cakes. They know materials have different qualities. They distinguish between objects which float and sink. They know the main parts of the body. They know that different animals have different habitats. They recognise and record the main features on a walk to their local post office, and describe the different types of houses they pass on the way
175. Through a good range of visits children begin to build up an understanding of their Welsh heritage. They have an increasing awareness of the different ways of life for children in other countries and cultures. They realise that people in the community undertake different types of work.
176. In the reception, children recognise that there are 'special days' during the year which include anniversaries and religious festivals. They use computers and controllable toys and manipulate the cursor and mouse effectively. They create illustrations using simple graphic programs.

Shortcomings

177. There are no important shortcomings.

Physical development

Nursery: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Reception: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

178. Nursery children use a range of small and large equipment with increasing control. They have a good understanding of how to play outside safely. They walk, climb, pedal, run, balance, hop and jump showing well developed co-ordination and confidence. They follow routes and pathways riding bicycles and scooters sensibly. They move energetically.
179. Childrens' cutting and sticking skills are well developed in the nursery and they use brushes carefully when painting and drawing. They make good progress in developing their fine manipulative skills.
180. Reception children know that exercise is good for them. They try hard when balancing, climbing and swinging. They begin to develop hand and eye co-ordination when striking balls with bats. In the reception children use paint and resources well. They have increasing dexterity when using tools and the computer.

Shortcomings

181. There are no important shortcomings.

Creative development

Nursery: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Reception: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

182. Children use different techniques to produce an effect. They mix colours thoughtfully to produce a different colour. They know the names of the primary colours both in English and in Welsh. They make an impression 'using sponges' and experiment with flowing lines and with sprinkling and spotting to produce a desired effect. They enjoy stimulating role-play activities and show imagination when moving to music.
183. Reception children know the names of some simple percussion instruments and play them sensitively to accompany the songs they sing enthusiastically such as 'Polly Put the Kettle On' and 'Little Peter Rabbit Has a Fly Upon his Nose'. They take turns fairly using materials such as flour and sand to produce an effect. They have a growing sense of how to use tone and texture when drawing and painting. They confidently use a range of paintbrushes to explore paint. They play a range of untuned instruments and explore the range of sounds which instruments make.

Shortcomings

184. There are no important shortcomings.

Mathematics

Key stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

185. In KS1 pupils respond well to questions, using a range of mental strategies to calculate and show answers. They have a good recall of number facts, which they use effectively to solve simple problems. They count to 20 and back, order numbers to 10, count in twos to twenty and understand the concept of one more and one less. Pupils recognise odd and even numbers, and use a number line accurately. They recognise and know the value of coins up to 20p. They know and use the vocabulary associated with addition and subtraction.
186. Pupils make good progress in their recognition and understanding of two and three dimensional shapes. They describe their properties confidently and begin to classify shapes according to mathematical criteria. They understand the concept of time and successfully sequence the times of the day. They correctly tell the time on the hour on an analogue clock. In KS1 they have a good understanding of measures. They confidently compare lengths, weights and capacity using the correct mathematical vocabulary during discussions. In KS1, pupils solve simple mathematical problems.
187. In Y3 and Y4 pupils order, read and write numbers to 1000 and round numbers less than a 1000 to the nearest 10 or 100. They choose the best operations of either adding, subtracting, multiplying or dividing to solve problems using practical apparatus as aids. They record sums of money using pounds and pence. Mental calculations are carried out on a daily basis and the pupils confidently and clearly explain the strategies they have used using mathematical vocabulary.
188. More able pupils in Y5 and Y6 have a sound knowledge of the four operations of number. They recall and apply number facts, factors, fractions and decimals when working on a Venn diagram and explain confidently their strategies using correct mathematical vocabulary. They have good mental strategies which are used very effectively when carrying out practical activities. They also record and discuss their strategies and reasoning confidently and clearly as part of their problem solving activities. To help them solve investigations they use practical resources. They use the interactive whiteboard as a different resource while carrying out mental activities.
189. In KS2 pupils confidently name and describe two-dimensional and three dimensional shapes and describe the process of finding perimeters and areas of a regular shapes. They discover these shapes around the school hall and discuss their properties with other pupils using correct mathematical vocabulary.

Shortcomings

190. While there are no important shortcomings, in some lessons, pupils do not make the progress in number they could because the work is not well matched to their abilities.

Information technology

Key stage 1: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

191. In KS1 almost all pupils use 'Granada Colour' to produce, for example, a firework picture. They work enthusiastically with good results. In Y2 a few pupils use the mouse to alter the font, text and colour of poetry they have word-processed.
192. In KS2 almost all pupils work with growing independence to produce work of a good standard. Pupils in the Communication Disorder Unit for example design a puppet for a younger pupil using an art package.
193. Older pupils create an image with two lines of symmetry. Almost all pupils work independently and co-operate well to achieve the learning objective. They demonstrate a good understanding of graphic modelling using 'Open Office' to create a seating plan for a theatre. They have good mouse and keyboard skills and produce some good results.
194. Older pupils in KS2 have a good knowledge of retrieving stored information. They generate multimedia and 'PowerPoint' presentations about a chosen sport, using images, hyperlinks and animation. They use the 'Internet' confidently to investigate topics from other lessons.

Shortcomings

195. Older pupils in KS1 have limited keyboard skills; this impedes their progress in lessons.

History

Key stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

196. In both key stages pupils develop an effective historical vocabulary, which they use appropriately to describe historical events and to research relevant information.

197. Pupils in both key stages have a good recall of periods they are studying. They are keen to share their knowledge with others. They have a good understanding of what life was like in Wales in the past. In both key stages pupils have as a result of their study of the history of their school, a good understanding of how life in their area has changed.
198. In both key stages pupils have a good sense of chronology and use time lines to set out various periods in history.
199. Pupils in Y1 develop a good chronological awareness and engage productively in a role-play situation to find out how washing was done in bygone days by washing dirty clothes in a tub using a washing board and soap and water. They accurately name the artefacts used and ask interesting, pertinent questions. They compare and contrast historical and modern approaches to washing days and recognise that changes take place over time. They identify differences between today and in the past by asking questions about electricity and running water.
200. In KS1 pupils make good progress in developing their skills of enquiry by making use of historical pictures, books, artefacts and buildings in order to improve their skill of asking historical questions.
201. Pupils in Y3 and Y4 have a very good understanding of life in Mountain Ash during the Second World War. They identify and describe in detail situations and changes that took place during the war and show an accurate knowledge of the life of evacuees. They have a good understanding of the difficulties that these children experienced. They discuss in detail the letter they received from a resident of Mountain Ash who came as an evacuee and never went home to his parents at the end of the war. They have a good understanding of the difference between government propaganda posters and actual photographs of evacuees as evidence of what really happened.
202. Pupils in Y5 consider the historical event of the Coronation of Elizabeth II from the perspective of the Queen, Prince Phillip and the people of Britain. They identify and carefully describe the main events from within this and the period of the Second World War. They identify some of the causes and consequences of some of those events and changes. They have good skills of enquiry, for example when talking to older local residents. They select and organised the information using appropriate historical vocabulary.
203. Older pupils in Y6 work very effectively to make detailed notes from a drama about the drowning of a boy in the local canal a hundred years ago. Their writing shows a mature sensitivity and empathy for the boy and his family.

Shortcomings

204. There are no important shortcomings.

Music

Key stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

205. Pupils sing with enthusiasm and are able to sing in tune.
206. In Y1 almost all pupils compose a simple piece of music about, for example 'fireworks'. They handle percussion instruments appropriately and listen to other group's compositions with interest.
207. In Y5, pupils compose and perform a rhythm pattern using musical notation. They are aware of the value of crotchets, quavers and rests to the beat of four. Almost all appraise the work of others offering good suggestions about how work can be improved.
208. By Y6 pupils sing with a sense of melody and stay in tune. They understand the use of ostinato to sing a song in four parts. They devise their own rhythms. They work well as part of a group.

Shortcomings

209. There are no important shortcomings.

Physical education

Key stage 1: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 2: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

210. Pupils in both key stages understand the importance of 'warming up' before undertaking physical activities and 'cooling down' afterwards. They recognise the changes that occur in their own bodies when they take part in physical exercise. In both key stages they show a sound understanding of the importance of making sure that activities are safe. Across the school, all pupils wear appropriate clothing for their activities and dress and undress quickly and efficiently.
211. In KS1 and KS2, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the skills of physical education are well established. In KS1, they travel forwards, backwards and sideways. They bear weight on different parts of their bodies. They work co-operatively when working with partners and small groups to build more complex series of movements. They use space sensibly.

212. In KS2, pupils develop their hand and eye co-ordination well, passing balls using a range of different passing and catching techniques to send and receive. They build up their skills systematically and make good progress. They co-operate willingly in team activities and show good levels of care and consideration for each other. In gymnastics they travel with a change of pace, direction and level, building up a series of sequences and movements.
213. Older pupils enthusiastically participate in a good range of team games with and against other schools. They compete fairly and try hard to win.
214. In both key stages pupils respond well to music and creative movement. In KS1, they move well to music linking actions and dynamics. They move rhythmically and take a pride in performing well, extending their limbs with good style and control. In KS2, they develop their skills in rhythmic movement when developing steps in a dance. They move expressively. Older pupils swim well and are confident in the water.
215. Across both key stages, pupils evaluate and assess their own achievements and those of others fairly and constructively. They evaluate each other's performance and suggest ways of adapting techniques to improve standards.

Shortcomings

216. There are no important shortcomings.

School's response to the inspection

217. The inspection findings recognise that we have made good progress since the last inspection and that the key issues of that inspection have been well addressed. Standards in subjects previously a grade 3, have improved. We are pleased that the inspectors largely agreed with the school's Self Evaluation and that standards across all 7 key questions were good with no important shortcomings. It was particularly pleasing that the inspectors recognised that the school is at the heart of our community and that several features of this work were outstanding.
218. The skill and dedication of the teachers and the care and talent of the support staff are duly acknowledged. Most importantly the inspection report makes clear the elements that make our school successful. In particular the report confirms that we are achieving our aim of making our school a place where children can develop within a sound moral framework with high expectations and good levels of support.
219. We agree with the areas for improvement highlighted in the report and already have instituted plans to address them. Some of the recommendations are recognised by the school and already form part of the current SDP. Other recommendations will form part of the action plan and will be addressed over the coming academic year.
220. The school wished to express its thanks to the team for the courteous and professional way in which the inspection was conducted. The stated aim of the registered inspector was 'to celebrate what the school does well and to move the school forward to the next stage of development'. We confirm that this aim has been achieved.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Darren-lâs Primary School
School type	Nursery and Primary
Age-range of pupils	3 – 11
Address of school	Kingcraft Street Darrenlas Mountain Ash
Postcode	CF45 3LT
Telephone number	01443 473291
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Enoch
Date of appointment	1 st January 2004
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr Alan Richards
Registered inspector	Mr Peter Mathias
Dates of inspection	5 th – 7 th November 2007

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	28	27	25	18	19	17	24	29	187

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	9	0	9

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	27:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	12:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	2:1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	27
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of school
Autumn 2006	87.6	93.1	93.05
Spring 2007	88.4	92.2	92.7
Summer 2007	87.3	87.5	89.9

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	24
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 1:

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results 2007 Compared to 2006 national results			Number of pupils in Y2:				19			
Percentage of pupils at each level										
			W	1	2	3				
English:	Teacher assessment	School	0	5	58	37				
		National	3	13	63	20				
En: reading	Teacher assessment	School	0	16	37	47				
		National	4	14	55	27				
En: writing	Teacher assessment	School	0	5	95	0				
		National	5	14	68	12				
En: speaking and listening	Teacher assessment	School	0	11	47	42				
		National	2	10	63	24				
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	11	63	26				
		National	2	10	64	23				
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	63	37				
		National	2	9	66	24				

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English according to teacher assessment			
In the school	89.47	In Wales	80.6

W Pupils who are working towards level 1

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 2:

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2007 Compared to 2006 national results			Number of pupils in Y6					32		
Percentage of pupils at each level										
			W	1	2	3	4	5		
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	3	25	41	31		
		National	1	1	4	16	48	30		
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	3	22	50	25		
		National	1	1	3	14	48	33		
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	13	56	31		
		National	1	0	2	12	52	34		

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and English			
by teacher assessment		by test	
In the school	71.88	In the school	N/A
In Wales	74.2	In Wales	N/A

W Pupils who are working towards level 1

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

- A team of four inspectors, who were present in the school for nine inspector days, carried out the inspection with a nominee from the school.
- A pre-inspection meeting was held with the inspection team and the nominee.
- Pre-inspection meetings were held with parents and the governing body to discuss the life and work of the school.
- Thirty-five questionnaires were completed by parents and carefully analysed.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff with responsibilities and support staff.
- School documentation and samples of pupils' work were examined.
- Thirty-four lessons or sessions were observed.
- A sample of pupils' work from across the ability range in each year group was examined.
- Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils from each year group reading.
- Discussions were held with pupils about their work and about the life of the school.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during break periods, at lunchtime and at the beginning and end of the school sessions.
- Inspectors attended assemblies and observed extra-curricular activities.
- Post inspection meetings were held with the staff and the governing body.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mr Peter Mathias (Registered Inspector)	Context Summary & Recommendations Contribution to Key Questions 1 & 2 Key Question 5 Key Question 6 Early Years Physical education
Mrs Janet Warr (Lay Inspector)	Contributions to Key Questions 1, 3 & 4
Mrs Millicent Phillips (Team Inspector)	Contributions to Key Questions 3, 4 & 7 Mathematics History
Mr Alan Smith (Team Inspector)	Contributions to Key Questions 2, 4 & 7 Special Educational Needs Information technology Music
Mrs Anne Enoch (Headteacher/Nominee)	Contributions to all Key Questions

Acknowledgement

The inspectors wish to thank the management group, the headteacher and all the staff for the co-operation and courtesy they received during the inspection.

Contractor:

E.L.L.I.S. (Cymru) Ltd
13 Heol Pentre Y Felin
Llantwit Major
CF61 2XS