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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on
Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School**

**Afan Valley Road
Cimla
Neath
Sa11 3TA**

Date of inspection: 19 October 2010

by

Mr William Gwyn Thomas

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

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

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

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

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

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

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Context

Cefn Saeson is an 11-16 mixed, comprehensive school maintained by Neath Port Talbot Unitary Authority (UA). The school is situated in Cimla, a residential area about one mile from Neath town centre. The school's designated catchment area includes four Community First wards.

There are currently 800 pupils on roll compared with 843 at the time of the last inspection in November 2004. Pupils of all abilities attend the school.

There are 45 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff in the school. Cefn Saeson is an enhanced resource school housing the UA specialist facility for the visually impaired pupils.

In 2009/10, 17.3% of pupils were eligible for free school meals (FSM). This is marginally above the national average of 17.1%.

In 2009/10, 1.6% of pupils had a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and a further 14.8% had been identified as needing additional support. The percentage of compulsory age pupils on the SEN register is 16.4% which is below the national average of 20.9%.

Ninety-seven per cent of the pupils come from English speaking homes and two per cent from other homes. One per cent of pupils in the school speak Welsh as a first language.

The headteacher was appointed permanently to the post in October 2005. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to personnel in the school at all levels.

The school's mission statement is to develop "a learning community where success is expected and celebrated". The school's aim is to set and maintain high standards in all aspects of school life, with a clear emphasis on the provision of high quality teaching and learning.

The 2010-2011 individual school budget per pupil for Cefn Season Comprehensive School is £3815 which compares with a maximum of £5613 and a minimum of £3747 for secondary schools in Neath Port Talbot. The school's budget per pupil places Cefn Saeson as ninth out of the 11 secondary schools in Neath Port Talbot.

Summary

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

Current performance

- This is a good school because of the:
- good standards achieved by pupils;
- high quality care, support and guidance;
- good quality teaching; and
- comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because of the:

- continuing overall maintenance of good standards;
- senior management team's (SMT) thorough understanding of the school's strengths and its areas for improvement;
- high commitment to supporting learners' achievement and wellbeing; and
- commitment of the learners and community to the success of the school.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the staff and governors of Cefn Saeson School need to:

- *R1 devise and implement further strategies to maximise the potential of all pupils;
- *R2 strengthen the role of all managers in quality assurance and self-evaluation arrangements;
- *R3 ensure consistency in all aspects of assessment and reporting;
- *R4 improve the standards and provision of Welsh in (KS) 4;
- *R5 accredit all key skills at the appropriate level in each key stage in support of pupils' progression; and
- *R6 develop further the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities with regard to bilingualism and transition.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main Findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

The school's performance is good in key stage (KS) 3 and KS4.

In KS3, between 2008 and 2010, results in the core subject indicator (CSI*) and English, have been in the top 25% and mathematics and science in the top 50% for two of the three years when compared with those of similar schools in Wales. In 2010, the CSI compared very favourably with the family of schools. There has been a continuous improvement in English results over the past three years. They are above the family*, local and national averages. Results in science and mathematics were above the family, local and national averages in two of the last three years. Over a three-year period, results in the CSI and science are slightly variable and falling in mathematics.

The percentage of pupils achieving National Curriculum (NC) level (L) 6+ in each of the core subjects in 2008 and 2009 was above the family, local and national averages. This was not the case in 2010. In 2009, pupils made good progress from KS2-KS3 in many indicators.

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In 2010, the achievement of pupils at NC L5+ in the majority of non-core subjects is in the top half of similar schools in Wales.

In KS4, pupils' performance in all key indicators, except for the average wider points' score (AWPS*), has been very strong over the last three years. In 2010, based on the provisional summary of secondary school performance (SSSP) data, results in all indicators were in the top 50% when compared with similar schools in Wales. Results in the threshold L2* including English and mathematics and CSI (both second highest in the family in 2010) had been in the top 25% for the last two years as had been the core subjects of science and mathematics. Over a three-year period, trends in several key indicators are rising.

In 2009 in KS4, results show that pupils make very good progress based on their attainment at the end of KS3. In their AWPS, pupils underachieved.

In 2010, in both key stages, girls generally perform better than boys.

At the end of KS4 in 2009 and 2010, no pupils left school without a recognised qualification. At the end of Y11, 96% of pupils continued their learning and 2% were not engaged in education, employment and training. These are good features.

Specific groups of children, including those in receipt of FSM and with recognised additional needs, make good progress in relation to their ability and in line with the achievements of other pupils.

Overall, in the lessons observed, learners make good progress. Nearly all pupils listen attentively and speak confidently. Communication skills are good. Pupils' reading skills are stronger than their writing skills. Many pupils achieve good standards in information and communication technology (ICT). Numeracy skills are good in mathematics and are used well in several subjects. Overall, this skill is developing across the curriculum.

The percentage of pupils achieving L5+ in Welsh second language has been above the national average for the last three years. It was also above the local and family averages in 2008 and 2009. However, pupils' achievement in KS3 Welsh is falling.

Standards in Welsh in KS4 are adequate. In 2010, in the GCSE short and full course combined, 76% of pupils gained an A*- G grade. While this performance is above the local authority average, performance at grades A*-C is well below. Overall, pupils do not use incidental Welsh across the curriculum or around the school. The quality of incidental Welsh spoken by some learners is adequate.

*Core subject indicator refers to performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the NC.

L2 threshold represents a volume of learning equivalent to 5 GCSE's at grades A-C.

*Families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in deprived areas, having special education needs and learning English as an additional language.

*The average wider points' score accommodates all externally approved qualifications.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and have positive attitudes towards physical exercise and improving their diet. High levels of participation are evident in fitness, sporting and related extra-curricular activities.

Pupils' attendance levels are very good when compared with similar schools and compare very favourably within its family of schools over the past three years.

Behaviour within and around the school is good. Only one pupil was permanently excluded in 2009/10 and fixed term exclusions have reduced significantly over a three-year period.

Behaviour within the lessons observed was good. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes reflect their full participation in learning and decision-making about their life in school. All pupils are courteous and polite. They are very helpful to the visually impaired pupils and to visitors on campus.

The school's involvement with the community is strong. Pupils gain good levels of knowledge, experience and confidence. Many pupils play a positive role in a wide range of activities in the local community and beyond.

Every year group has a school council. Pupils contribute effectively to several aspects of school life including participation in the appointment of new staff and the work of the governing body.

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

The school provides a suitable curriculum. In KS3, it ensures that adequate time is given to cover NC and religious education requirements. The collaboration to ensure consistency in transition in curricular provision with partner primary schools is developing, both in core and foundation subjects.

The school offers a sound range of general and vocational courses in KS4. All learners have the opportunity to gain accreditation. A productive partnership exists with Neath-Port Talbot College and with other partnership schools in the area. The school exceeds the requirements of the Learning and Skills' (Wales) Measure.

Through an open-option policy, the school is successful in ensuring that pupils follow their preferred choice of study at KS4, although the school recognises that there is a limited choice in vocational courses at level one. It prepares and guides the pupils well for making their subject choices.

The school bands and sets pupils according to ability. There is appropriate flexibility for pupil progression.

The variety of extra-curricular activities is extensive. These provide a good range of experiences from drama, sporting and musical activities to exemplary charity work.

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The delivery of key skills in KS3 and KS4 is good. Currently, there is no provision to accredit these skills. Literacy is targeted effectively with a range of strategies. Provision is good in ICT lessons while in numeracy it is developing. Students following Business and Technology Educational Council courses have key skills as part of their requirements.

Welsh language provision is good in KS3. In KS4, provision is adequate; the time allocated to Welsh-short course is slightly less than an hour per week. Many pupils are entered for the Welsh GCSE short course, with a minority following the full GCSE. The Welsh dimension is developing appropriately.

There is good coverage of sustainable development issues in many subjects, in PSE lessons and assemblies. The newly formed Eco-committee has already been proactive in identifying a number of initiatives to develop awareness of environmental matters further.

The school successfully enhances a good awareness of global citizenship. This is achieved through participation in links with European schools, projects and visits, debate of election issues nationally and internationally, and a diversity day.

Teaching: Good

Within the lessons observed, most teachers deliver good lessons. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to inform their planning. In the majority of lessons, a good range of teaching strategies is employed. The lessons have good pace and challenge. There are clear aims and objectives. In the outstanding lessons seen, teachers engage learners fully, and conduct worthwhile plenary sessions so that the teaching has a positive impact on learning. In the very few adequate lessons, pupils do not make sufficient progress because of lack of pace and challenge and over-direction by teachers.

Working relationships between pupils and teachers are very good.

The quality of marking varies between and within departments. In the best examples, books are marked regularly with informative and diagnostic comments given to learners on how to improve. However, in around half the books sampled, marking is superficial with supportive rather than diagnostic comments, and there is too much missing or incomplete work.

Pupils are well informed about their progress. There is an easily accessible and consistent tracking system. Under achievement is identified early and appropriate action is taken. The mentoring system in year (Y) 11, which is now being extended to Y10, is having a very positive effect on pupils' attitude to learning.

Overall, reports to parents are good. The interim reports provide clear information on learners' progress and effort. Comments from many subject teachers in the end of year reports lack detail, and the targets set for pupils' improvement are too general.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Teachers and managers provide a particularly effective level of care. They respond quickly and skillfully to pupils' concerns. They work successfully with a large number of organizations to promote pupils' health and wellbeing.

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Provision for PSE is comprehensive. It makes a beneficial contribution to the ethos of the school, and the health and wellbeing of learners. A wide range of specialist external agencies make a worthwhile contribution to the programme.

Teachers and other members of staff provide good advice and guidance consistently to pupils that enable them to make confident and well-informed choices about the courses they follow. Where required, pupils receive appropriate personal support.

Learning experiences throughout the school promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school's ethos provides a stable and ordered environment which promotes respect, honesty and fairness effectively. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their personal beliefs and values, and the school promotes understanding of other cultures.

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

The school employs effective means of identifying and monitoring the progress of pupils with additional learning needs. Withdrawal from lessons to follow literacy and numeracy programmes develops skills at KS3. Small sets and highly structured work support pupils' achievement at KS4. The nurture room and visually impaired resource centre provide an exceptional level of care and boost pupils' confidence. Provision for more able and talented pupils is developing.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a caring and inclusive community where staff and pupils demonstrate mutual respect and care. Pupils are supportive of each other and have confidence in the staff. There is a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity.

Many resources are matched to pupils' learning needs and displays in corridors and classrooms support learning and celebrate achievement. School accommodation is sufficient and both the buildings and grounds are well-maintained.

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

Leadership: Good

The SMT has clear aims which focus on achieving excellent outcomes, high quality learning and the wellbeing of pupils.

Existing strategic objectives, plans and policies have been successful in achieving good outcomes in the areas identified in the school's aims. The majority of leaders fulfil their roles well in setting challenging and realistic targets for themselves and others, improving the quality of learning, standards and pastoral care. In a minority of

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managerial areas, although outcomes are good, there is insufficient rigour to meet all of the school's aims. In order to strive for excellence, the SMT has recently adjusted its systems to ensure that all leaders have greater accountability and consistency.

The headteacher and many subject leaders use data well to monitor performance at the end of key stages, and to set challenging targets. This is an effective process.

The school has appropriate arrangements for performance management. Individual and whole-school training needs are met successfully.

Governors are supportive and committed to school improvement. They have a good understanding of the school's performance and are developing a more secure understanding of key developments. Governors contribute positively in a number of committees. The finance committee has been successful in redressing a large deficit budget. Governors are assigned to departments. Their roles as 'critical friends' in evaluating the progress made is developing. Governors meet legal and regulatory requirements.

The school responds well to a number of the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities. Good progress has been made with the 14-19 Learning Pathways' programme, the use of key skills, wellbeing initiatives, raising pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship. The transition programme with partner primary schools and the raising of bilingual skills are developing well.

Improving quality: Good

The school's self-evaluation systems have been effectively developed since the last inspection and this has resulted in an improvement in standards. The school self-evaluation report (SER) provides a balanced analysis of strengths and areas for development. This report successfully addresses the three key questions in the new Inspection Framework.

Departmental self-evaluation reports are based on the new Inspection Framework, with many being able to identify strengths and areas for development. A few reports lack sufficient detail in identifying strengths and weaknesses.

There are good features in the self-evaluation process. These include the monitoring of performance data, the setting of targets and detailed subject reviews. The review process involves a member of SMT, the head of department, and a head of department from a family school. In most cases, this has been successful in identifying strengths and areas for development. While the review process has been successful in using a variety of first-hand evidence, there is still insufficient regular lesson observation and book scrutiny.

The school regularly takes account of the views of pupils, parents and the school council. In a number of cases these opinions have resulted in changes to school procedures and facilities.

The school improvement plan contains clear and appropriate priorities in addressing areas within the three key questions. It provides good direction for school improvement and includes short and longer term targets. The plan identifies clear

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actions to be taken. In a majority of departmental development plans, there is a strong link with school priorities. However, in a minority of departments, there is a lack of clarity in the targets set, identification of success criteria and strategies to raise outcomes further.

The school has a clear policy for identifying the continuing professional development needs of all members of staff. Attendance at externally-provided courses is supported well. The development of regular peer observations, within and outside subject areas, has been successful in sharing good practice.

The school has made generally good progress in addressing the recommendations identified in the previous inspection.

Partnership working: Good

The school has formed good partnerships with other local providers to extend its curricular choices for learners at KS4 and at post-16. The school consistently seeks to ensure good levels of liaison, trust and communication. The monitoring and evaluation of the experiences of its learners on courses provided by partner providers are appropriate.

The school has established suitable curricular links with its partner primary schools to promote continuity and progression in pupils' learning experiences. There is a transition plan in place and there is a useful programme of moderation to help ensure consistency in teacher assessment between KS2 and KS3.

Communication with parents is particularly good. Parents speak very highly of the responsiveness of the school to issues they raise or areas of concern. There are good links with the community, local businesses and teacher-training providers.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its resources thoroughly. Robust procedures ensure that resources are allocated to meet identified priorities. Spending is planned and monitored well.

Members of staff are deployed effectively and all statutory requirements are met. There is a suitable premises development plan and maintenance programme to improve accommodation.

Through rigorous management of resources, strong focus on collaboration to increase the range of courses and qualifications at KS4 and good standards, the school provides good value for money.

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Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report:

Responses to parent questionnaires

A total of 227 questionnaires completed by either parents or carers were returned. The satisfaction levels among parents are good.

Most parents are satisfied with the school where their child is safe. Parents state that the school is well run, teaching is good, expectations are high and pupils make good progress. Pupils like the school and they are supported to settle in well and take regular exercise.

Many parents are positive in relation to every aspect of the life and work of the school.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from 200 pupils. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school.

Most pupils are of the opinion that they are taught to understand and respect other pupils from differing backgrounds. They agree that there is always someone that they can turn to for help. They confirm that there are enough resources and teachers to help pupils learn, make progress and do well.

Many pupils believe that there are opportunities to exercise and keep healthy. Pupils are of the opinion that they are respected, treated fairly and encouraged to take on responsibility by members of staff. Many state that they receive good advice and are prepared well for their options' choices or to move forward to further education or employment.

The majority of pupils indicated that learners behaved well and that the school listened to their views.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

William Gwyn Thomas	Reporting Inspector
Glyn Davies	Team Inspector
Peter Harris	Team Inspector
Bethan Whittall	Team Inspector
Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector
Carole Herman	Peer Inspector
Vanessa Bassett	School Nominee

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Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

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