



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Comins Coch CP School  
Comins Coch  
Aberystwyth  
Ceredigion  
SY23 3BQ**

**Date of inspection: October 2011**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**



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

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

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

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

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

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

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

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## Context

Ysgol Comins Coch is situated in the village of Comins Coch two miles north east of Aberystwyth, in the county of Ceredigion. The majority of the children come from the village itself and the village of Waunfawr. A number of children also travel to the school from outlying communities. Children start in the reception class at the beginning of the term following their fourth birthday. There are 166 pupils, aged between four and eleven years of age, on the school register.

The school considers its catchment area to be neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. Just over 9% of the pupils are entitled to receive free school meals; this figure is significantly below the county and national average.

The nature of the intake is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged and comprises the full range of ability. Twenty-nine pupils are designated as having special educational needs, including three pupils who have a statement of special educational needs.

English is the main language of nearly all pupils and no pupils speak Welsh as their home language. Welsh is taught as a second language at the school.

Estyn last inspected the school in 2005.

The individual school budget per pupil for Comins Coch CP School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £2,987 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Ceredigion is £8,706 and the minimum is £2,987. Comins Coch CP School is 60th out of the 60 primary schools in Ceredigion in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

### Current performance

#### **The current performance of Ysgol Comins Coch is excellent because:**

- pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 2 is well above expectations and they make outstanding progress during their time at the school;
- both the school's provision for Welsh and the pupils' Welsh language skills are outstanding;
- the headteacher provides strong and highly effective leadership;
- the governing body contributes very effectively to the school's self-evaluation procedures and improvement plans; and
- performance management arrangements for teaching staff are well established and exemplary.

### Prospects for improvement

#### **The school's prospects for improvement are excellent because:**

- the school's self-evaluation arrangements are very effective;
- robust monitoring procedures ensure that evaluations of teaching and learning are based on comprehensive and accurate first-hand evidence;
- information from self-evaluation is used very effectively to develop and prioritise improvement plans with a clear focus on raising skills;
- the school has been highly effective in securing improvements over time; and
- the school reflects carefully on its practices, is receptive to new ideas and consistently seeks new and innovative ways to improve its provision.

## Recommendations

R1 Further develop the implementation of assessment for learning strategies across the school; and

R2 further develop the role of support staff, developing their skills and expertise.

### **What happens next?**

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. The school will be invited to prepare a written case study for Estyn describing excellent practice identified by the inspection.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

#### Standards: Excellent

Over the last four years, pupils at key stage 2 have consistently achieved well when compared to pupils in similar schools. This level of performance is well above expectations and pupils make outstanding progress during their time at the school. Performance at key stage 1 has consistently improved over the last three years, and in 2011 pupils achieved well when compared with pupils in similar schools.

Nearly all pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners. They can successfully recall previous learning and they make good progress in their current work. They can work together very effectively in pairs and in group work to support each other's learning.

Nearly all pupils have good speaking and listening skills. They show high levels of confidence in using these skills. Older pupils express their ideas, opinions and feelings confidently.

In the Foundation Phase, nearly all pupils read accurately and at an appropriate level to their age and ability. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils are confident, fluent and expressive readers.

Across the school, the written work of nearly all pupils is of a high standard. They write independently, often at length and for a range of purposes and audiences, using a wide choice of vocabulary. They spell words accurately and use appropriate punctuation well. Most pupils' presentation and handwriting skills are good.

Pupils with additional learning needs achieve very well against personal targets and make very good progress relative to their ability. Nearly all pupils who follow additional reading and spelling programmes make good progress within a short space of time. All pupils entitled to free school meals, the pupils who have English as an additional language, and the more able also make very good progress.

Nearly all pupils' Welsh language skills are excellent. They enjoy learning Welsh in a range of subjects and use Welsh well in collective worship, in extra-curricular activities and generally around the school. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of their Welsh work across the curriculum. They use a wide range of sentence patterns accurately and effectively. They ask and answer a variety of questions very well. By the end of key stage 2, nearly all pupils read accurately and with expression. They write in Welsh with accuracy and often at length in a range of subjects. In 2011, key stage 2 Welsh second language results were outstanding, all pupils achieved level 4 in Welsh second language, 58% of pupils achieving level 5 and 11% level 6. These results are significantly higher than the local authority and Wales averages.

## **Wellbeing: Good**

Behaviour is very good at all times. Nearly all pupils enjoy their lessons; they are fully engaged in their learning and are proud of their work and their school. Attendance, at 95.9%, is significantly above the local authority and Wales averages. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of good attendance and most arrive punctually.

All pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. Pupils feel safe and valued in school and know their opinions matter.

The school council and the eco council take an active role in making decisions that have a positive effect on the life of the school. Members of both councils have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and make a valuable contribution to school life. They make decisions which improve the quality of learning experiences for pupils. The school council arranges fund raising events such as bag packing in a local supermarket to raise money for playground equipment.

All pupils are courteous and show respect to adults. Nearly all pupils interact well with each other. All pupils are aware of targets to improve their own learning. Most pupils work effectively in pairs and in groups and are appropriately engaged in planned activities. Nearly all pupils engage well with their tasks and manage to complete them within the allotted time. Many pupils enhance their social and life skills by taking part in the extra-curricular activities offered by the school. Year 6 pupils develop entrepreneurial skills by running the fruit tuck shop successfully.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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## **Learning experiences: Good**

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, and meets pupils' needs effectively. All teachers work together well to plan the school's detailed and comprehensive schemes of work. They make sure that key skills are embedded in all subjects across the curriculum. This planning develops pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding systematically and ensures continuity and progression for pupils' learning. All teachers plan their lessons well to provide a good variety of enriching and stimulating experiences which challenge pupils appropriately.

All teachers provide good opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. They also provide a good range of interesting activities to develop pupils' information and communication technology, literacy, numeracy and thinking skills. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, community events and a broad programme of residential visits for key stage 2 pupils. This contributes well to developing pupils' social skills.

Provision for Welsh is excellent. All teachers use Welsh regularly in lessons throughout the day. The school teaches art, geography, music and physical education through the medium of Welsh and aspects of other subjects bilingually. An innovative immersion project has improved standards and increased pupils'

confidence in using Welsh. The school provides staff with very good support to improve their own Welsh language skills through a range of Welsh courses. The headteacher has been on the Welsh sabbatical scheme. There is a flourishing Urdd club at the school and many pupils are successful in a variety of competitions at the Urdd eisteddfod. The school provides a very good range of opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the culture, history and traditions of Wales. It celebrates most aspects of Welsh life very effectively.

The school makes good provision to develop pupils' awareness of sustainable development, for example through the eco council's activities. Members of the eco council are enthusiastic and show a good understanding of the importance of caring for the environment both locally and globally. The eco council is helping to monitor the school's energy consumption and developing the school grounds. The school makes very good use of the links with the local community as a learning resource. Pupils' understanding of their role as global citizens is developing well through fair-trade activities and links with several schools across Europe.

### **Teaching: Good**

The quality of teaching is good. Most lessons are well planned and clearly identify learning objectives. Nearly all lessons build upon previous learning experiences successfully. The balance of teaching approaches is good in all classes; however, a few introductory sessions are too long. All teachers use questioning well to extend pupils' understanding and develop thinking and communication skills. All staff are consistent in their approach to develop pupils' bilingual skills and are good language models. Teachers and support staff have good subject knowledge and have high expectations of all pupils. All staff have good relationships with pupils, are supportive and foster learning. Teachers and support staff use a good range of behaviour strategies, and teaching assistants support less able pupils effectively. All teachers prepare work that is adapted well to the individual needs and ability of the pupils. The school delivers a range of appropriately planned outdoor activities and good use is made of the available facilities.

All teachers track pupil performance effectively and they set clear targets to meet their learning needs. The school has clear and consistent records of pupils' achievement. Teachers have developed confidence in assessing and moderating pupils' work, which is reflected in the accuracy of end of key stage results. The school uses a wide range of assessment material effectively and analyses it well. All teachers offer appropriately detailed feedback and this enables pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve. Most pupils comment on their own progress and are given opportunities to contribute to individual targets. The school is implementing a range of assessment for learning strategies in all classes. This is developing well but is not consistent across all classes. The school's reports to parents are detailed and informative and set out clear targets for improvement.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school cares for and guides its pupils well. The importance of physical health is promoted effectively through the curriculum and supported by the development of outdoor play facilities and a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. A pupil



support worker undertakes the role of health mentor effectively to support the school council's work in improving playtimes and outdoor play facilities. Residential visits to Llangrannog, Cardiff and Ireland provide pupils with valuable experiences and promote their independence. The school provides good opportunities to raise awareness of the importance of eating healthily. For example, it encourages healthy snacks and lunchboxes and provides a fruit tuck shop and water fountains, and pupils are involved in preparing and tasting different foods.

Good attendance and punctuality are promoted well and unexplained absences are followed-up promptly. The school works effectively with the local authority inclusion team to identify and support pupils whose attendance rate gives cause for concern. Regular whole-school assemblies celebrate good attendance, behaviour and effort.

The school's police liaison officer helps raise awareness of substance misuse, and visits by the school nurse and dentist enhance pupils' understanding of their health and wellbeing. Regular circle time and class assemblies provide valuable opportunities for children to share and reflect on their experiences and feelings. Shy and reserved children are supported well by a school club, which is having a positive impact on their self-esteem. The school regularly accesses a variety of other specialist support services that provide valuable guidance for staff and pupils. Pupils have benefited recently from input by the Family Support team; English as a second language support; speech and language therapy; and specialist advice on provision for pupils with physical disabilities.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

The school uses assessment information effectively to identify pupils who need support. There is appropriately planned provision for every pupil with additional learning needs, including the more able. Pupils' individual education plans contain clear, realistic targets and they support pupil progress effectively. All teachers review and evaluate the plans regularly with pupils and parents. The school has good and effective links with relevant external agencies, which benefits pupils.

### **Learning environment: Good**

The school encourages a positive, supportive, and caring ethos where each member of the school community feels valued and included. Well-planned assemblies and a range of appropriate class activities help raise awareness and celebrate diversity. They also help pupils understand that inappropriate or oppressive behaviour is not an acceptable part of school life. The curriculum and other activities actively avoid stereotyping by gender. All reasonable steps are taken to ensure access for pupils with physical disabilities.

The school accommodation is well maintained and sufficient for the number of pupils and activities offered. It is safe, stimulating and supportive of effective teaching and learning. The corridors and classrooms have numerous colourful, welcoming displays of children's work. The school makes effective use of all the space available and this is regularly monitored, evaluated and modified.

The school has an on-going programme of improvements to the outdoor learning environment. The governing body receives detailed annual reports on the condition and suitability of the site and buildings. Recent improvements include improved access to the dedicated Foundation Phase teaching area, adventure play areas and wildlife area and garden. These developments have contributed well to improving the quality of provision.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
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### **Leadership: Excellent**

The headteacher provides strong and very effective leadership. This ensures that the school has a clear sense of direction and a culture that strives for improvement. The school has adopted an effective staffing structure that replaces a deputy head with two assistant heads and a higher level teaching assistant. This works well. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and are well matched to the school's requirements. Meetings for staff focus very clearly on improvement plans.

Performance management arrangements for the teaching staff are well established and exemplary. They are carried out efficiently and contribute significantly to the high standards achieved by pupils. The objectives for improvement are well matched to whole-school improvement plans, individual development needs and, where appropriate, the development of leadership skills. Performance management arrangements for support staff are developing well. The school's induction arrangements are very effective and have provided valuable support to recently appointed staff.

The governing body understands its role well. It has a very good understanding of how the school performs in comparison with similar schools. It is provided with highly informative analysis of data and is aware of the issues arising from it. The governing body contributes very effectively to the school's self-evaluation procedures and its improvement plans.

The school reflects carefully on its practices, is receptive to new ideas and consistently seeks new and innovative ways to improve its provision. It is at the forefront of many national developments such as the implementation of the School Effectiveness Framework, professional learning communities, assessment for learning and provision for Welsh as a second language. The school is frequently used as an exemplar of best practice to others at both local and national level. These developments have a very beneficial impact on improving teaching and learning.

### **Improving quality: Excellent**

The school's self-evaluation arrangements are very effective. The school analyses performance data very effectively and identifies relevant trends and progress over time. First-hand classroom observations and book scrutiny enable the school to monitor and evaluate pupils' learning robustly and accurately. The headteacher evaluates the standards of teaching regularly. The feedback given to teachers has a very positive impact on their performance in class. Teachers also observe each

other's teaching and this is having a very good impact on their professional development. The local authority also contributes well to evaluating the standards of teaching and learning at the school.

Self-evaluation procedures take good account of the views of pupils and parents. The school responds well to the significant support and challenge provided by local authority monitoring reports. Information from self-evaluation is used very effectively to develop and prioritise improvement plans with a clear focus on improving skills. The plans include an appropriate range of relevant actions and identify members of staff with responsibility for their delivery. They also include success criteria and well-defined timescales for completion and clearly identify the resources allocated. The school has been highly effective in securing improvements over time. It has made very good progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous inspection.

All teachers are actively involved in professional learning communities within and beyond the school. For example, the school's international project has had significant impact on developing staff expertise, understanding and morale. These networks have contributed well to developing classroom practice and, where relevant, contributed effectively to the development of leadership and management skills.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has established an extensive range of partnerships with other schools, higher education institutions and relevant services within the local authority. Close co-operation with the partner secondary and primary schools has led to the development of a very effective transition plan. Effective use is made of transition meetings, visit days and additional learning needs review meetings. These promote the smooth transition of pupils to secondary schools. They are further supported by activities such as sports and residential visits arranged with other local schools to provide opportunity to meet and develop friendships with other children transferring to secondary school. Effective links exist with a local college and initial teacher training providers and the school contributes regularly to the practical aspects of training. The school has effective partnerships with the Breakfast Club, After School Club and Holiday Club, which are all held on the school site. These help to promote pupil wellbeing effectively and are well attended.

The relationship with parents is strong. Parents' evenings are well-structured with clear aims. Communication with parents is effective and good use is made of the school's website, emails and text messages as additional means of communication. The school provides information sheets such as First Days at Ysgol Comins Coch, All about Me and The Eisteddfod to help inform parents about school life. The active parent teacher association contributes well to the financial and social wellbeing of the school. The school encourages parents to support pupils through workshops in areas such as mathematics to explain methods and strategies used in school. Welsh learner classes are also organised for parents who want to improve their skills and support pupils.

The school's partnership with the local authority's school development service is having a good impact on provision and standards. The school is supported and challenged effectively.

**Resource management: Good**

The school is appropriately staffed to deliver its curriculum effectively. It meets the development needs of staff very well through performance management systems. All the relevant staff have the required time for planning, preparation and assessment and this is used effectively to share good practice, monitor, plan and prepare resources. The higher level teaching assistant manages the deployment of support staff very effectively. The staffing structure of the school gives clarity to roles and responsibilities of all staff. Detailed job descriptions are in place. The school uses staff expertise effectively to teach particular lessons such as music and physical education.

The school makes very effective use of external resources and offers residential visits to all pupils in Year 4 and above. All pupils have opportunities for regular educational visits and for making use of community resources such as the Art Centre, the museum and the National Library. The school is very well resourced and learning resources are regularly audited, maintained and improved. The provision of effective information and communication technology resources is very good.

The school's budget is effectively allocated to meet its priorities and is monitored appropriately. The school makes good use of the funding it receives and gives very good value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

Over the last four years, at key stage 2, the percentage of pupils attaining level 4 (the expected level at 11 years of age) in English, mathematics and science has consistently been in the top 25% when compared to national benchmarks for schools with similar levels of free school meals. The school's performance has also been above the average for its family of schools during this period. This level of performance is well above expectations and pupils make outstanding progress during their time in the school. With the exception of science in 2010, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 5 and above for all core subjects has also been above the average for the family and the Welsh average for the last four years. A few pupils attained level 6 in either English, science or Welsh in 2011.

In 2011, at key stage 1, the percentage of pupils achieving level 2 (the expected level at seven years of age) in English, mathematics and science was in the top 25% when compared to national benchmarks for schools with similar levels of free school meals. Performance for the key stage was also above the average for the family of schools and has shown a consistent upward trend for the last three years. Performance at the higher level of 3 and above was above the family average in English and science in 2011, but below this average in the previous year.

At key stage 1, boys outperformed girls at the expected level 2 in both 2010 and 2011. At key stage 2, girls performed slightly better. However these differences are not significant.

Pupils with additional learning needs achieve very well against personal targets and make very good progress relative to their ability. Nearly all pupils who follow additional reading and spelling programmes make good progress within a short space of time. All pupils entitled to free school meals, the pupils who have English as an additional language, and the more able also make very good progress.

## Appendix 2

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

All pupils feel safe in school and nearly all know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. All pupils say the school teaches them how to keep healthy and nearly all think that there are lots of opportunities for them to get regular exercise. They feel that they are doing well at school and all say that the teachers and other adults help them to learn and make progress. Many pupils say that other children behave well and that they can get their work done and that children behave well at playtime and lunch time. Many pupils also say that the school deals well with any instances of bullying.

All parents say that they are satisfied with the school and nearly all say that it is well run. They all note that their children like the school and that they feel the children are safe there. Most parents say that they are well informed about the progress their children make at the school. All say that pupils are well behaved and nearly all believe that staff treat all children fairly and with respect. Nearly all parents also feel that they are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem and all say that their child was helped to settle in well when they first started school. A very few say that the homework provided does not build well on what their child learns in school.

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Iwan Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Ann Jones	Team Inspector
Dylan Jones	Lay Inspector
Delyth Mainwaring	Peer Inspector
Tom Fanning (Headteacher)	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

## 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