



# Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd

12<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Mr Paul Warren  
Bedwas Junior School  
Church Street  
Bedwas  
Caerphilly  
CF83 8EB

**Assessment Date: 12<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

## Summary

In this lively and friendly junior school, set in the little town's shopping street, staff members say it's, "One for all and all for one," and that, "Everybody mucks in." There is no sense of hierarchy: the Head teacher clearly enjoys his job, consults widely and is much liked by all. Governors and parents share the school's determined Inclusive stance. They know that accepting challenging pupils who have failed elsewhere might endanger the achievement statistics on which their school is judged, but they want to help every child in their care and enable them to "become the best that they can be." Parents are thrilled with the friendliness they encounter here: "As soon as I walked in and saw the welcome from the receptionist and the Head teacher, I just knew - there was a massive sense of relief."

This is an honest school. Pupils describe the school as "trustworthy." The IQM self-evaluation return described practices that were all evident during the visit. As a result, the school has a clear sense of its direction and values, and a clear plan towards its future, and that is why standards are steadily rising, year by year, and why this very old building is full of light new spaces, high quality art work and professional calm. New pupils arriving here experience friendliness and firmness in equal measure, and they respond well.

I am of the opinion that the school fully meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark, and moreover that it is ready to become a Centre of Excellence. There are only minor areas requiring development and the school is aware of these. I recommend that the school be awarded the Mark and be reassessed in 3 years' time.

**Assessor: Barbara Curry**

**Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. McCann'.

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Joe McCann MBA NPQH  
Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd

<b>Name of School:</b>	Bedwas Junior School
<b>Head teacher:</b>	Mr Paul Warren
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> July 2014
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://learn.caerphilly.gov.uk">http://learn.caerphilly.gov.uk</a>
<b>Assessor:</b>	Barbara Curry
<b>Successful:</b>	Yes

### Context of the School and Sources of Data

Bedwas Junior School sits in the heart of its community, opposite local shops in the middle of this lively little town. Bedwas has a mixture of housing, from traditional terrace houses built at the height of the mining industry here, to neatly kept interwar council estates, and also more “aspirational” housing for professionals commuting into Cardiff and Newport: “A very wide social spectrum” as one governor put it. The school’s Edwardian buildings have been much improved and the site is both safe and easily accessible from the street.

The school was last inspected by Estyn in 2009 and is due to have another inspection soon. In 2009, the school was found to be Grade 1: “good with outstanding features.” The school tracks its pupils’ progress against national and local averages, and generally pupils do better than both of these. This year’s SATs results show continuing improvement: for example, Literacy Level 4+ attainment has risen steadily from 63.16% in 2011 to 92.5% this year, and Maths from 78.95% in 2011 to 95% this year (school data as presented to parents and governors). National test data for 2013 places the school in the highest quartile compared to similar schools.

There are relatively few EAL or FSM pupils, but the school has an open and generous attitude towards taking in pupils with challenging behaviour and severe learning difficulties. The school is aware that at times this will affect end of KS2 percentages.

### Portfolio and Other Supporting Evidence

Interviews: Head teacher, LA EAS adviser and Inclusion Services specialist teacher, 4 teaching staff members at different stages of their careers, informal conversation with Deputy Head teacher, School Council, informal conversation with three pupils at lunchtime, Chair of Governors and two members of SEN and pupil wellbeing group, 1 support staff member and 2 non-teaching staff members, four parents, local artist-in-residence.

Documentation: Estyn report 2009, pupil progress data, intervention mapping, website including parental survey and newsletter/blogs, photographic evidence on display, pupils’ books and teacher marking.

Observations: Tour of school, pupils at lunch in the canteen, lessons in progress.

### Element 1 - Learner Progress

Evidence: Pupil progress data, IEPs, pupil's books.

#### Strengths:-

- Learner achievement is improving annually, and this includes standards at higher levels. For example, in 2011, 21.05% of pupils gained Level 5 in Literacy, and in 2014 it was 45%. In 2011, 36.84% achieved Level 5 in Maths, and in 2014 it was 45%. In addition, 47.5%, nearly half of Year 6 pupils, achieved Level 5 in Science this year.
- Pupil progress meetings set targets for all pupils termly and any pupils operating at 2 sublevels below expected attainment are identified for IEPs. Vulnerable pupils such as those with FSM, family under stress, with medical needs or LAC are recorded according to interventions and tracked separately. One “vulnerable” category includes children with attendance below 93% an ambitious figure compared with many other schools who do not respond to poor attendances unless they fall below 85%. Colour-coding makes checking progress on large charts simpler: for example, blue is used where children have made progress of two or more sublevels above National targets, and a dominant colour-change through the year shows value-added. In one cohort, the chart showed 8 pupils making 2 sublevels progress in Y3, 20 pupils in Y4 and 27 pupils in Y5.
- The school is determined to provide an engaging, broad and relevant curriculum for its pupils, and to avoid a diet overly dominated by Literacy and Numeracy. During the week of the IQM visit, pupils were working on a variant of “Take a Picture,” examining WW1 photographs, with Year 5 and 6 pupils working on Wilfred Owen poetry in their Literacy lessons. In Maths lessons, able pupils are given problem solving tasks to extend their ability to use what they have learned. Children are challenged across the whole curriculum, and they rise to the challenge, producing thoughtful and well-presented writing, art and topic work.
- Targets are taken from structured Skills Ladders and in children's Maths books, stickers show which targets have been reached. The teacher assessment in Literacy uses “two stars and a wish” to move children to the next level. It is the policy of the school to avoid children discussing their “levels” in public or with each other, so that children with lower attainment levels do not feel inadequate.
- Successes of all kinds are celebrated publicly, on the website, on notices around school and in assembly presentations.
- The school believes that “Everyone's got the capacity to excel at something.”

#### Areas for development:-

- Because the school operates holistically and works hard to ensure all pupils are able to discover their talents and strengths across the whole curriculum and beyond, the school might like to investigate use of “SHINE” programmes and to track pupil involvement with sports, playing an instrument, taking a leading part in a school play, being on the School Council or Eco-group etc. to enable staff to see if any children are failing to take part in wider opportunities.

### Element 2 – Learner Attitude, Values & Personal Development

Evidence: Tour of school, meetings with parents, School Council, and other pupils informally.

#### Strengths:-

- Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and have no hesitation in saying the school is “so much fun” and that the “teachers are all nice and help you.” They comment that new children are always made welcome and looked after. They say the teachers are good role models and show them how to be confident and helpful. One child used the word “trustworthy” and was able to explain how this quality contributed to a friendly community in which people feel safe.
- Children have a variety of favourite subjects and activities: Spanish lessons, playing with skipping ropes at break time, writing stories, letters and diaries in Literacy, number work in Maths and dance and athletics were all mentioned.
- The children are able to recite by heart the “3 steps” approach to bullying, which is on display in the hall.
- They know they will be looked after if they are bullied, and they use the “worry box” for concerns.
- They understand the need to conserve energy and they take responsibility for switching off lights. They remember taking part in an experimental “No electricity day,” but they say it was impossible to avoid switching some lights on and for teachers to teach without their IWBs!
- Children very much enjoy the points system which enables them to win “Golden Minutes” on a Friday afternoon. They know they can win back lost points by good behaviour, and they are looking forward to a secret “special event” at the end of term to say thank you to them for behaving well. Children’s behaviour is very good, and there is a sparkle about their eyes which suggests they love being seen to be good.
- The School Council works well, and pupils are articulate, responsible and keen to share ideas.
- Children take up a variety of responsibilities, including cleaning canteen tables after lunch.
- Transition between the Infant School and High School is very well managed, with children visiting their new schools, teachers liaising and sharing information, and SEN or vulnerable pupils being given extra visits and as much time as they need.
- The local artist-in-residence who has spent time in school comments that compared with other schools she knows, “Parents walk in happily, there’s good rapport, it’s in the heart



## Assessment Report



of the community and children are very warm, open and friendly.” This was confirmed during the IQM visit.

- Pupils meet adult visitors who enrich their understanding of the world. A Paralympian came in his wheelchair and spoke honestly about his experience of taking drugs and how this had led to his motorbike accident. Asking questions, children learned that with the right attitude, disability does not have to be a barrier. This visitor made a deep impression on the children.
- Children’s work is always well-presented, with good handwriting valued.
- Positive and sensitive handling of gender issues is an example of the school’s philosophy.

### Areas for development:-

- There are no significant areas for development.

### Element 3 - Leadership & Management

Evidence: Meetings with Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher, staff at all levels and governors.

#### Strengths:-

- The energetic and democratic Head teacher has a strong vision for the school and carries the whole community with him because he consults widely and delegates wisely. A recent decision about a change in school uniform was initially researched by parents, not by senior staff, and as a result was accepted happily.
- Inclusion is a value shared by the whole school community. All would agree that one new student deserves to make the best progress she can: “Including her is not about pacifying or babysitting... we don’t want her to lose her spirit... it’s about her uniqueness and her smile.”
- Teachers all have responsibility for the School Development Plan. They are given time to work on their section of it.
- The Head teacher genuinely enjoys being with the children. One parent said, “They queue up to see Mr Warren and he’s got time for them all.” He is in demand to support other schools, but he says he loves his job and this school and is in no hurry to be head-hunted elsewhere. Governors are delighted with the appointment: “We’d definitely choose him again.”
- LA personnel, governors and staff all praise the Head teacher’s ability to “think outside the box.” He persists in trying to find solutions to problems, and he shields staff from some of the outside pressures which can make teaching so stressful.
- There is little sense of hierarchy here: the caretaker will answer the office phone or help a child if necessary, the Head teacher teaches classes to release staff, and governors volunteer to help in classrooms.
- Governors understand the balance between support and challenge, and they leave day-to-day management issues to the Head teacher.
- The senior leadership team is committed and has in place an efficient monitoring structure.
- The Inclusion Team meets fortnightly, plus morning meetings.

#### Areas for development:-

- Because governors are already highly professional, they might like to check their effectiveness against Governor Mark free online criteria to see if they can perform even better.



## Assessment Report



- The school's logo used to be, "Striving for Excellence" and the Head teacher would like to update this to reflect the school's inclusivity. Various quotes from stakeholders in this report might provide a starting point for new staff-governor-parent brainstorming.

### Element 4 - Staffing System & Organisation

Evidence: Interviews and conversations with teaching and non-teaching staff members.

#### Strengths:-

- The strong team ethos at Bedwas is evident everywhere, and expressed very well by one member of staff, who said the school is, “One for all and all for one.” Staff members including the Head teacher will, “Muck in if something needs doing.” The energetic caretaker manages a sparkingly clean building, is “hands-on,” gets involved with the children’s activities and gardening club, and helps to make costumes for productions. Someone said, “She’s worth two or three caretakers.”
- People who work here say they love the school and are in no hurry to find promotions elsewhere. They say, “We are all included, we are all members of the school.” Non-teaching staff members say, “We feel involved, we are part of the school and our opinions matter.”
- The Head teacher’s decision to appoint a person in charge of Wellbeing impacts on staff as well as pupils. Adults too are counselled if they need it, and parents and children are full of praise for her work.
- The Head teacher takes a compassionate approach to any members of staff suffering a personal problem, and he shows respect to his staff by ensuring staff meetings and INSET days are focused and relevant. As one member of staff put it, “We get stuff done, and we also have a laugh.”
- The Head teacher is always looking for ways to reduce staff workload, for example in new marking guidelines.
- New teachers are well supported and take responsibility for managing subjects quickly. Individual training needs are addressed.
- New pupils bring new training needs. Recently there has been training to help with a particular child with severe learning difficulties and another with a potentially life-threatening medical problem.
- There is a very good gender balance in the staff.

#### Areas for development:-

- Since the Local Authority is able to offer only limited testing and support for some conditions such as dyslexia, the school would do well to develop specialist expertise among its own staff. Even though the condition is complex and supporting pupils can take different forms, with a likely average of two dyslexics per class (national figures), some specialist intervention could help open opportunities for these pupils.

### Element 5 – The Learning Environment

Evidence: Tour of school

#### Strengths:-

- The school presents a solid Edwardian frontage to the road which is enlivened by wall mosaics made with children by an artist-in-residence, and with colourful and well-tended hanging baskets. Roofing and gutters have all been modernised and there is a quick response to health and safety concerns: for example, a recent shared-wall problem with the old school house garden.
- Indoors, the Reception area has been opened out and refurbished to create a bright, clean welcoming area with a smart light-wood desk for the Receptionist.
- Corridors, the hall with its new stage, toilets and classrooms have all been brightened with opened-up windows which had been boarded, and clean, fresh new paint on the walls.
- Classrooms have inviting reading corners, with one in Year 3 decorated like a little garden, and reminders about rules and emotional literacy language clearly displayed in all. Windows have smart blue blinds and there is an IWB in each classroom.
- Display boards are immaculately tidy, and important permanent notices and art work in corridors and classrooms have been professionally framed. This gives children a high-quality learning environment which emphasises the importance of good presentation and this is reflected in their work.
- The school does not have adequate grassed areas, but this shortfall is made up by the local High School, and children take the short walk there for athletics, Sports Days and rugby. Outdoors, there is good play space and a pretty garden with seating and some shelter.
- The school has made good use of a local “artist in residence” to work with children, parents and governors on a series of beautiful mosaics which enhance the environment. A large wall mural celebrates the local river and incorporates textures and patterns from other cultures. Panels at the front of the school depict endangered animals. Every adult member of the school community was encouraged to lay down at least one tile on these, and children were more thoroughly involved, in design and making.
- The “Wellbeing Room” is a high-quality oasis which has appeal for adults as well as children. With lilac walls and a yellow horseshoe table, it is both welcoming and practical. There are puppets and board games, important notices properly framed and “story sacks.”

#### Areas for development:-

- The canteen was described by one governor as “disgusting,” but it is clean and hygienic and serves its purpose. Staff members have cheered up the old demountable building with bright colours and murals. However, this building is next on the Governors’ list for refurbishment.

### Element 6 - Teaching & Learning

Evidence: Interviews with teachers and Head teacher, visits to classrooms.

#### Strengths:-

- The school constantly evaluates the curriculum. Recently, an emphasis on oracy has been introduced. There is a genuinely broad and balanced curriculum which engages pupils at the right level for each child. The Head teacher says, “Creativity is at the heart of what we do.”
- Pupil feedback and School Council feedback on teaching ensures a genuine Pupil Voice, which is listened to.
- The school regularly monitors quality of teaching. This is not a “top-down” arrangement, however: peer observations and the process of “critical reflection” mean that teachers are involved in the process of improving their skills, not handed down areas for improvement from above. The focus of observations is on what children are learning, and there has been a “complete culture-change” in performance management towards a coaching and mentoring model.
- Planning takes into account different levels of achievement and notes are made when expected learning has not taken place (but please see below).
- Teachers say that their skills are improved by the use of specialist teachers such as the artist in residence (who is a trained teacher) and by watching sports and gymnastics coaches. This requires non-contact time to enable observations, and the Head teacher supplies this as needed.
- Marking is well designed to record lesson objectives met and in Literacy also “two stars and a wish” to help children move forward, with sometimes a “Q” question to develop reflection in the child.
- One aspect of the school assessment policy is that “content achieved” is more useful than giving levels for every piece of work. Structured “skills ladders” and shared moderation help to establish accurate levelling.

#### Areas for development:-

- There was no evidence seen on the visit to confirm that when lesson objectives are not met, those few pupils are given additional teaching. This would require a lesson-by-lesson change in practice, unless the very good marking system ensures all the support needed.

### **Element 7 – Resources & ICT**

Evidence: Tour of school and discussion with pupils and staff.

#### Strengths:-

- This school is a forward thinking and experimental user of new technology. There has been priority spending in the last few years and children have access to state of the art equipment and software, such as animation for a recent project on Tommy Cooper, Prezi presentations, Kindles and iPads. Children speak of using and mastering these with confidence and pride. As a result of the animation project, the school was invited to attend a red carpet award ceremony.
- Children's IT skills are very good. Year 3 Comic Strip cartoons combining pictures and text were very professional. Children on the day of the IQM visit were recording a podcast.
- All resources in school are good quality and new looking. Old materials have been discarded, so that there is no clutter and so that working resources are easy to find.

#### Areas for development:-

- There are no significant areas for development.

### Element 8 - Parents & Carers

Evidence: Interviews with four SEN parents, two parent governors and one grandparent volunteer.

#### Strengths:-

- Parents are full of praise for the school: “It’s like a big family here,” “loving and caring and happy,” and, from a parent trying to articulate that the school supports and nurtures children well beyond the written curriculum, “It’s beyond a school.” Parent questionnaires also give very positive feedback. 97% of parents in 2013 said they felt the school was “well run.”
- One parent related that her child’s new teacher had commented, after the mother had written a note: “There is no need to write me letters. I will always have time for you.” Other parents noted that this was typical of all the staff, including the Head teacher.
- Parents of Special Needs children are very grateful for the regular meetings and updates, some of which are formal meetings but others include use of home school books and little updates at the beginning and end of the school day. IEP reviews take into account the views of parents, with staff asking for their advice and opinions. One parent with experience of other schools said with surprise “The meeting was ours.”
- Events such as a bereavement or death of a pet are dealt with sensitively, using Circle Time and giving the child affected the emotional vocabulary to deal with it. Parents know that they can tell the teacher at the beginning of the day if the child is upset for some reason, and it gives them peace of mind to know the school will look after a child who has arrived at school emotionally unable to work.
- The website is a popular means of communication, with regular updates on school events and nearly all families having access to a computer. Children are allowed to use school computers for homework if necessary. Blogging is popular and in 2013, there were 17,000 “hits” on the site. Parents commented that communication is very good.
- There is a PTA with 8 regular members, who organise fundraising events such as the “Fruity Friday,” a balloon race and swimming galas, and even “support cross-country running in the rain!”
- As part of the school’s “100-year curriculum” for WW1, volunteer parents and grandparents have taught children to knit, with every child making a square for a blanket.
- Parents enjoy Family Learning and say that it has helped them support their child with homework. The uptake is “not massive” but parents are “targeted” and clearly benefit.

#### Areas for development:-

- There are no significant areas for development.

### Element 9 – Governors, External Partners & Local Authority

Evidence: Interviews with the Chair of Governors and two members of the SEN/Pupil Wellbeing committee, two Local Authority representatives and meetings with staff.

#### Strengths:-

- Governors are active, knowledgeable and engaged. They support and appreciate the inclusivity of the school, even though they know this will sometimes affect total attainment figures for a cohort. They take “learning walks” around the school, they know the school’s strengths and weaknesses and they interrogate data.
- Governors take responsibility for Health and Safety and they do termly walks around school with the caretaker. They also provide support for the school’s “wellbeing” programme, with two governors sharing responsibility for SEN and wellbeing, and one combining this with child protection. They know that the effectiveness of SEN interventions is tracked and they can compare “before and after” data.
- Governors share twice yearly Governor Days and these include safeguarding checks, discussion on admissions and other policy decisions. They say they are proud of the school’s “dynamic” curriculum.
- The Local Authority is able to provide some excellent support for the school: Advice from the CASS team on ASD is appreciated, and support for one child with severe learning difficulties has been “amazing.” The EP service is rather stretched, however, and is not available as much as the school would like, and sometimes pressure is put on Bedwas to accept vulnerable children without sufficient support. The Head teacher is firm about insisting that new children are not set up to fail, and governors support this stand.
- As one Local Authority representative said, “This is one of the best schools I work with for Inclusion - it is not token Inclusion.”
- The Local Authority EAS School Improvement Advisor knows the school very well and feels the tracking systems are robust, the curriculum is “exciting,” the investment in developing high quality consistent teaching is showing an effect, and that both are showing results in the greater number of higher level achievements at the end of KS2.

#### Areas for development:-

- Governor support for new governors is very welcoming, but new governors currently have no mentor, and LA training is not always taken up. Governor induction should be improved for all governors to be as effective as possible.

### Element 10 - The Community

Evidence: Interviews with governors, staff and parents, tour of school.

#### Strengths:-

- “This Head teacher has done a lot of good in the community” said one Governor.
- The school draws from local expertise: the local artist in residence will continue to support art teaching in the school. A professional photographer who helped children create superb photo portraits is to become a business governor.
- Children’s work is celebrated in the wider community. Their photographs were shown in an exhibition in the local library as part of the “Bedwas Community Project. Children have photographed and interviewed older community members, who included an ex-Head teacher of the school, an RAF veteran, a former mayor and a Chinese businesswoman.
- Relatives of staff members and governors get involved. One governor’s husband set up the website and a staff member’s relative built wooden hoppers to store children’s lunch bags neatly.
- A new large outdoor stage enables the community to be invited to watch performances, and these are well attended. This was bought with funds raised by the PTA.
- An unusual feature of the school is the row of clocks, showing different times around the world.
- The school’s cluster group provides mutual support.

#### Areas for development:-

- There is perhaps scope to expand the world studies aspects of the curriculum, using the children’s Spanish lessons as a starting point and perhaps expanding the school world clocks display to add maps and other visual learning material linked with these. During the IQM visit there was no evidence of the school linking with others in other countries and this could be perhaps developed with the help of Skype and e-mail.