



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Coed -y- Garn Primary School

**Parrot Row
Blaina
NP13 3AH**

Date of inspection: October 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Coed -y- Garn Primary School

Name of provider	Coed -y- Garn Primary School
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Not applicable
Number of pupils on roll	212
Pupils of statutory school age	164
Number in nursery classes	30
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 21.3%)	33.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 22.2%)	21.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	January 2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	03/03/2014
Start date of inspection	17/10/2022

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Coed-y-Garn Primary is a warm and inclusive school, which promotes a positive atmosphere and ethos. Pupils enjoy learning and they are enthusiastic during lessons and in activities. This is due to the very strong working relationships that they have with their teachers and other staff. The learning resource base, and its pupils, play a very important part in the school's daily life.

Learning is particularly successful where the teaching and feedback to pupils are purposeful and challenge pupils to perform at their best. This helps many pupils to make strong progress in developing their listening, speaking, reading and number skills. However, the quality of teaching and feedback is not consistently challenging across the school. Overall, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to use and develop their independent learning skills, especially when writing extended pieces of work.

All staff promote a very positive ethos of support and care for pupils in all areas of the school. This encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own well-being and behaviour extremely well. This contributes to their positive attitudes to learning and their resilience to persevere with tasks. The school helps pupils to build confidence in themselves as individuals, while also developing a strong respect for the feelings of others. Overall, the school environment promotes beneficial learning opportunities, which includes a stimulating woodland area.

Leaders evaluate the school's work to plan for improvements thoroughly. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. She has a determination to succeed for the benefit of pupils and the community. The senior leadership team, the staff and the governors share her purposeful vision. They work together well to ensure that the school is inclusive and that it promotes good learning opportunities.

The headteacher shares responsibilities effectively among staff and provides beneficial opportunities for professional learning. This contributes to a positive whole-school ethos, where staff and pupils feel valued for their contributions to school life.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the issues related to the school site, identified at the time of the inspection
- R2 Challenge all pupils through consistent and effective teaching
- R3 Ensure that teachers provide opportunities for extended independent writing
- R4 Ensure that teachers' feedback moves individual pupils on to the next stage in their learning effectively

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the impact of the teaching and the use of the learning environment to promote authentic learning experiences in the learning resource base, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils enter the school with skills that are below the expected level for their age. Most pupils achieve well across all areas of the curriculum, with many of them making effective progress in their speaking, listening, reading and number skills.

Most pupils with additional learning needs achieve well and pupils in the learning resource base (LRB) make very strong gains in their learning. Across the school, pupils needing support access all aspects of the curriculum successfully and they make purposeful progress from their starting points.

Many pupils' speaking and listening skills develop quickly. As they move from nursery to Year 2, they gain confidence and answer questions sensibly while discussing tasks with their peers. For example, Year 2 pupils express their feelings eloquently in the woodland area while roasting marshmallows over the fire pit. From Year 3 onwards, pupils make good progress and develop a wider vocabulary. They listen well to each other and engage in attentive discussions, such as reflecting on the Aberfan disaster. Many pupils in the LRB develop beneficial speaking and listening skills, to access a wide range of interesting and very stimulating activities.

Many pupils make rapid progress in developing their reading skills. Many of the youngest pupils learn the sounds of letters quickly and, by Year 2, many pupils' progress in reading is good. They attempt unfamiliar words using a variety of phonic strategies purposefully. By Year 6, many pupils are competent readers, and they are well equipped to tackle a variety of different texts. For example, they discuss the characteristics of mythical beasts and the dangers involved if they encountered one.

Many pupils make effective progress in their writing considering their starting points. By Year 2, the majority of pupils are beginning to write suitably, using basic punctuation and grammar. As pupils progress from Year 3 to Year 6, many write effectively in a prescriptive set of genres. For example, Year 5 pupils write diary entries on the life of a miner in a coal mine. Many pupils edit their work carefully and use more advanced vocabulary successfully to improve their final drafts. As a result of a lack of opportunity, pupils do not develop their independent extended writing skills sufficiently.

When speaking Welsh, most of the youngest pupils develop basic vocabulary and phrases and respond to commands and greetings appropriately. By Year 2, most pupils use simple phrases occasionally, such as expressing their feelings. Progress for most pupils slows as they get older and by Year 6 pupils demonstrate a limited recall of simple sentence structures and relevant vocabulary. As a result, their Welsh oracy skills are underdeveloped.

Many pupils develop effective mathematical skills. By Year 4, many pupils partition and compare three- and four-digit numbers effectively. Older pupils develop their number skills competently and many use an appropriate range of skills, such as decimals and percentages purposefully. They measure and draw angles accurately and begin to use fractions confidently, for example to share jacket potatoes at

lunchtime. Many pupils transfer their mathematical skills to a variety of contexts well. For instance, they interrogate a set of data to find the mean, median and mode of an Olympic medal table, and they plot co-ordinates in four quadrants to draw different shapes.

Many pupils have good digital skills, which they use across the curriculum successfully. For example, many younger pupils programme robots to travel around a course efficiently. Most older pupils manipulate text effectively, such as creating fact files on important characters from Black History and whilst preparing presentations on renewable energy. Many pupils create and use simple databases and spreadsheets confidently.

Most pupils develop their artistic and creative skills well. This is particularly true of the youngest pupils, who create art and role-play in a wide variety of contexts. For example, reception pupils wash socks enthusiastically before pegging them to dry on a washing line. Additionally, nearly all pupils in the LRB embrace the freedom to experiment and develop their creativity, whilst role playing in the fake mine shaft.

Across the school, most pupils develop their thinking skills well. They use effective strategies to resolve tasks and they persevere diligently when problem-solving. They state coherently that finding challenging tasks difficult is beneficial to their learning.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are happy and demonstrate a positive attitude towards school and their learning. They are ready to participate in lessons and enjoy their learning experiences in a nurturing, caring and purposeful environment.

In classes and around the school the behaviour of nearly all pupils is exemplary and they move between classes and other areas in a polite and controlled way. They are well-mannered and show kindness and respect to all adults and each other. They welcome visitors warmly with a smile and demonstrate positive attitudes to others, for example by holding doors open for adults in the corridors. The elected 'Well-being Warriors' and 'Calm Area Monitors' support this ethos of calmness and help to provide pupils with a sense of ownership and responsibility for their own well-being.

Nearly all pupils feel valued at school and state that inclusion and equity are strong features of the school. Many pupils with additional learning needs and those eligible for free school meals embrace leadership roles and responsibilities willingly and play a successful part in the daily life of the school. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and know whom to approach if they have any worries. They are confident that staff will address their concerns and this strong emphasis on caring for each other permeates throughout the whole school. Nearly all pupils delight in the welcome that they get every morning during their 'meet and greet' sessions at the door of their classes.

Nearly all pupils can draw on strategies to support their emotional well-being effectively. For example, pupils use their own 'coping wheels' to regulate their feelings purposefully through practices that include meditation, listening to music and drawing. As a result, nearly all pupils develop confidence and resilience, when persevering with their work. Nearly all learners are developing as ethical, informed

citizens through their awareness of fairness, the way they show care towards others, and their knowledge of children's rights. For example, older pupils consider the impact of food miles on their favourite food and the negative impact this has on the environment.

Nearly all pupils are keen to talk about their work and are proud of their achievements. They engage purposefully in lessons and demonstrate an interest in their learning, which includes listening sensibly to the views of others. Pupils who require additional help to manage their feelings respond well to the highly skilled support provided in the school's 'Cwtsh', as and when the need arises in classes.

Pupil voice groups are fully inclusive and well-established. They contribute positively to improvements around the school. For example, representatives of pupil voice groups inform the headteacher about aspects of the school development plan. For example, pupils set targets for the school to develop its grounds and outdoor learning opportunities. Representatives undertake their work proudly and make a valuable contribution to the school's life and work. This includes leading whole school assemblies on matters that are important to them, such as peer support on improving each other's well-being.

Most pupils are developing skills to encourage enterprising and creative collaboration. Older pupils approach and explore problem solving enthusiastically in science and engineering experiments. For example, they apply their knowledge of the position of the sun to place a solar panel accurately to produce energy efficiently on a windowsill.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily and sing and sign songs to encourage healthy lifestyles in assemblies. They understand the benefit of physical exercise on their health and well-being, such as running a mile a day is good for their heart health. Additionally, the younger pupils access the school's woodland area passionately and embrace their outdoor learning experiences with joy.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate a firm grasp on how to remain safe in everyday life. This includes road safety and first aid practices. Nearly all pupils know how to stay safe online and remind each other sensibly that they do not share passwords.

Attendance figures for the school dropped significantly after the pandemic. The school has an action plan to improve attendance and the actions have already raised the attendance in this new academic year from 88% to over 90%.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, teachers and support staff develop positive working relationships with pupils and create a supportive and inclusive learning environment. They encourage respect among pupils and each other and have high expectations of behaviour. This contributes positively to the calm and caring ethos of the school.

Staff know the local community and the needs of its children very well and adapt their teaching to develop pupils' learning effectively. The school's provision for personal and social education effectively encourages pupils' understanding of their own well-

being . Staff use a wide range of initiatives and strategies very well to support the mental and physical health of pupils. These have been particularly effective in supporting pupils on the return to school after the pandemic. They have helped pupils to manage their anxieties and emotions by giving them the appropriate vocabulary with which to express their feelings.

Teachers plan interesting activities and tasks that contribute to a purposeful working environment. Staff ensure that pupils feel listened to and can ask questions if they need help with their learning. Support staff work alongside teachers skilfully and contribute effectively to planning and to pupils' learning and well-being.

The school has started to implement a curriculum that is broad and balanced and reflects the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales. This includes planned theme weeks and celebratory events that engage pupils' interests well, such as Welsh history week, re-cycling week and fairness week. Teachers in the LRB plan highly effective authentic learning experiences that are integral to the class's theme. This outstanding practice targets pupils' learning very successfully.

Provision to develop pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills is successful across the school. Teachers ensure suitable arrangements to develop pupils' writing skills, however, an over reliance on worksheets limits the opportunities for pupils to write at length independently. The development of pupils' Welsh language skills is adequate. A minority of staff use basic Welsh vocabulary appropriately in the classroom, for example to give instructions to their pupils. However, teachers do not make the most of opportunities to model the language or encourage pupils to speak, ask and answer questions in Welsh.

Provision to develop pupils' mathematics is effective. Opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills authentically across the curriculum are beginning to impact on pupils' understanding of how to use mathematics in real life situations. The planning of opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills is good. For instance, teachers plan useful activities where pupils interrogate simple databases and spreadsheets and prepare presentations on their personal aspirations.

Through valuable and stimulating learning experiences, the school celebrates the language, culture and heritage of Wales with pride. Each year, the school marks the anniversary of the Aberfan disaster with every class studying a different aspect of the tragedy. For example, Year 3 learned about the Queen visiting the village after the disaster, and they planted a tree in her memory and for all who lost their lives.

The school uses a detailed approach to tracking pupil progress in literacy and numeracy. Teachers and leaders use this and other sources of information to inform their planning and to identify pupils who require targeted intervention well. For example, they use termly benchmarking data for reading to select individuals for specific support.

The teaching is generally good across the school and where it is most effective, teachers challenge pupils to produce their best work in lessons. However, the level of challenge for pupils varies from class-to-class and it is not consistent across the school.

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback and suggest improvements to their work using newly developed planning sheets. However, the quality of feedback across the school is variable and current approaches do not support pupils well enough to improve their work and develop their skills effectively. For example, teachers do not address spelling, handwriting and basic punctuation errors consistently. Teachers repeat the same feedback often without any impact on the pupils' next pieces of work.

The school collaborates closely with colleagues in the cluster, including the feeder high school, to ensure consistency of approach and to share good practice as well as maximising training opportunities. As a result of this positive provision, pupils are becoming more ambitious and innovative learners, such as through the older pupils' work on Rube Goldberg's designs.

School reports to parents and carers provide suitable information about their child's progress and attitudes to learning. They contain useful targets to highlight the next steps for learning for individual pupils.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a very caring community, and the staff encourage pupils to contribute positively to its supportive and friendly ethos. The beneficial relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils of different ages, are a strong feature of the school. Teachers and support staff understand pupils' needs effectively and they respond with sensitivity to the pupils' emotional and social needs. This supportive and warm atmosphere helps nearly all pupils settle in easily to school life and it contributes significantly to their happiness in school and their overall well-being. These diligent and thoughtful practices encourage pupils to develop resilient attitudes to their learning.

The school operates a comprehensive system to gather information on pupils' progress as they move through the school. Teachers use the tracking process effectively to monitor pupils' achievements and well-being in their classes regularly. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of individual pupils' needs. Where staff identify issues for improvement, the school provides effective support and interventions to improve pupils' learning and their personal and social development. This includes counselling and therapy sessions from external providers and staff's use of the 'Cwtsh' areas, which provide nurturing and calming activities for pupils.

Staff ensure a broad and well-structured range of intervention strategies to improve pupils' basic skills. Most pupils enjoy taking part in these activities and, as a result, nearly all targeted pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Specific sessions that focus on pupils' well-being and self-esteem are effective and enable pupils to participate in lessons successfully. This helps to support their positive attitudes to learning, improves their social skills and encourages them to share their feelings openly with one another and adults.

The care and support provided by staff in the LRB is outstanding. The school provides personalised learning programmes and authentic learning experiences for pupils attending the LRB, which match their needs exceptionally well. These have a very positive impact on their individual progress and achievements. Staff in the LRB

work effectively with the staff in mainstream classes to facilitate pupils' integration into the daily life of the school.

The school works effectively with external agencies, such as educational psychologists, to provide specialist support and guidance for pupils. This collaboration successfully develops a range of skills and coping mechanisms for pupils with educational, emotional and social needs. It also supports staff to develop their professional practice to better support the specific requirements of pupils with additional needs. As a result of these arrangements, pupils receive caring and inclusive support from nursery to Year 6 and in the LRB.

The school provides an interesting range of visits and visitors to support the curriculum and engage pupils in their learning. This includes trips to a nearby mining museum and engineering sessions to construct model rollercoasters. In addition, studies of global atrocities, such as wars and famines, promote pupils' understanding of the importance of values, such as tolerance, and the right to a life without hunger and thirst. These activities make a positive contribution to pupils' social skills and cultural understanding. Additionally, there are stimulating opportunities provided to celebrate Welsh heritage and culture. These include studying the fate of Dic Penderyn after the Merthyr Risings and Owain Glyndŵr's battles against the English, when attempting to establish an independent Wales.

Teachers provide thought-provoking lessons that explore human rights and make a worthwhile contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. A strong feature of these lessons is that they encourage valuable pupil discussions, which successfully develop pupils' thinking and communication skills. These structured approaches in personal and social lessons include useful opportunities to explore issues of equality, diversity and inclusion from around the world.

The school ensures that persistent absences are monitored thoroughly, and any instances of bullying are addressed promptly by the school. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn the importance of staying safe. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding, and all staff understand clearly that pupils' welfare and safety are an integral part of their daily responsibilities. In most respects, the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements. However, the inspection team identified issues around the school site that need attention.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and newly appointed senior leaders focus on placing the school at the centre of its community and promote the well-being of pupils and their families effectively. The governors and staff support this vision and endeavour to implement it purposefully in their daily practices. This includes the staff in the LRB, which staff and pupils embrace as an integral part of the school.

Leaders ensure that a caring and supportive atmosphere is evident across the school. All staff engage willingly with the school's motto, 'Together We Can', which promotes inclusivity successfully amongst the pupils. This has a positive effect on their attitudes to learning and their care for each other. As a result, leaders ensure

that an inclusive and warm ethos exists throughout the school, which the pupils embrace willingly.

Leaders allocate roles of responsibility sensibly and they hold staff to account for the quality and impact of their work purposefully. They use the findings of rigorous performance management practices to improve the provision. Leaders focus on refining the quality of teaching and instilling a common understanding of professional values among staff. As a result, they ensure that most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.

The processes used by the leadership team to evaluate the effectiveness of provision are robust and based on a wide range of first-hand evidence. Systems to improve quality include detailed scrutiny of pupils' books, monitoring teaching and analysing internal and external data on pupils' progress. Leaders gather the views of other stakeholders about the school to inform their practice well. For example, they consider the views of the local community and act on any findings promptly, such as re-distributing local food bank collections to vulnerable families.

The school's shared leadership responsibilities ensure that leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. The links between the self-evaluation processes and improvement planning is well-established and secure. As a result, leaders prioritise their findings diligently and set purposeful targets to move the school forward.

Leaders embed strong practices to promote a thorough safeguarding culture with staff. Governors ensure that pupils eat and drink healthily and encourage parents to provide nutritious food in pupils' lunch boxes. Leaders work hard to develop effective engagement opportunities with parents and carers. This includes parents and children working together on creative and artistic tasks in classes.

The leadership team ensure that staff make the best use of the premises. This includes utilising outdoor spaces such as the woodland and planting areas. However, resources in the outdoor areas that lead from classrooms are not shared equitably across the school. Leaders allocate resources in the classrooms beneficially and use the pupil development grant wisely to support basic skills across the school. This results in targeted pupils making good progress with their learning.

Governors are knowledgeable about the work of the school and their regular input creates systematic improvements throughout the school. They are very supportive of the headteacher and hold her and other senior leaders to account as critical friends. The headteacher informs governors about pupils' learning regularly and advises them realistically on how to improve provision, such as creating the 'Cwtsh' for nurture activities. Governors develop a sound first-hand understanding of the school's activities. Alongside teacher, they undertake learning walks and discuss pupils' work to measure its quality. This promotes a valuable understanding of the school's current practices. Governors monitor the budget carefully and ensure that spending decisions are in line with the school's priorities for improvement, such as investments in digital hardware and outdoor equipment.

Leaders ensure that staff have access to high quality learning opportunities to support their professional development, which link closely to school improvement

priorities. Notable examples are training to develop cross-curricular planning to enhance pupils' learning and emotional coaching sessions to support pupils' well-being.

The school shares effective practices with local schools and this supports the school's capacity for improving assessment practices in line with curriculum reform. It provides valuable opportunities for teachers to compare and share their effectiveness with other professionals. As a result, the culture of continuous professional learning creates useful learning opportunities for pupils, which focus on developing ambitious and enthusiastic learners.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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