



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

A report on

**Abermule Primary School
Abermule
Montgomery
Powys
SY15 6ND**

Date of inspection: January 2019

by

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

About Abermule Primary School

Abermule Primary School is in the village of Abermule, about three miles north of Newtown in Powys. There are currently 53 pupils on roll aged 4 to 11. There is one class for pupils in the foundation phase and one class for pupils in key stage 2.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is around 21%. This is above the national average of 18%. The school identifies nearly 19% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is below the national average of 21%. All pupils come from a white ethnic background and speak English as their first language. Very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up her permanent post in April 2017, following two terms as acting headteacher. The last inspection was in December 2012.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The school has a warm family atmosphere and works closely with parents to ensure pupils' wellbeing. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Older pupils support younger pupils very well.

Teachers provide interesting learning experiences that engage pupils successfully in their learning. They take good account of pupils' own ideas about what they would like to learn. There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply their speaking and listening, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in their work across the curriculum. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in all areas of learning.

The majority of pupils make sound progress as they move through the school, but a minority do not always achieve as well as they could. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress from their starting points.

The headteacher has established a clear vision for the school and has initiated a number of worthwhile changes since her appointment. These are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. All members of staff collaborate effectively to work towards the achievement of identified priorities for improvement.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in pupils' writing
- R2 Improve pupils' Welsh language skills
- R3 Ensure that learning experiences provide a consistently appropriate level of challenge for all pupils
- R4 Increase opportunities, and ensure progression, in pupils' application of their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R5 Address the safeguarding and health and safety issues identified during the inspection

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

The majority of pupils make sound progress as they move through the school, but a minority do not always achieve as well as they could. Pupils with additional learning needs, and those eligible for free school meals, make good progress from their starting points.

Most pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well. Across the school, most pupils listen actively to stories read aloud by their teachers. In the foundation phase, most pupils use topic-related vocabulary effectively. In Year 1, for example, pupils suggest adjectives such as 'refreshing' and 'relaxing' to describe the sun. The majority use Welsh confidently in routine contexts such as registration periods.

In key stage 2, most pupils listen attentively to adults. They make valid contributions to group discussions and most use subject-specific vocabulary appropriately. For instance, they refer to 'resistance' and 'gravity' in science lessons. The majority of pupils use Welsh confidently in familiar, formal contexts, but few have a wide enough vocabulary to engage successfully in simple conversations.

Throughout the school, pupils read for a wide range of purposes and most make good progress in their reading skills. By upper key stage 2, many are familiar with a range of authors and can explain why they like their work.

In the foundation phase, most pupils use a variety of reading strategies, including their knowledge of letters and sounds, context, captions and pictures, successfully to read stories and information texts. They apply these skills well to find facts about nocturnal animals on the internet.

In the foundation phase, pupils write in a variety of forms including letters about their holiday and posters promoting exercise and healthy eating. They develop a good understanding of the purpose of writing through role-play activities in the 'weather station'. Many pupils are beginning to develop a good awareness of spelling patterns and their handwriting is legible. However, they do not often write extended pieces to a good standard.

Pupils in key stage 2 write for a good variety of purposes across the curriculum. For example, they write interesting accounts and poems about life in the trenches in the First World War. Most pupils develop a fluent handwriting style and present their work well. Although the majority of pupils produce some good pieces of extended writing by the end of key stage 2, a minority of pupils do not readily apply their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar effectively in their independent writing. By Year 6, many pupils write basic phrases in Welsh, such as a conversation between friends in a café, but their use of vocabulary is limited.

Across the school, most pupils achieve good standards in mathematics lessons. When given the opportunity, most pupils apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum to a similar standard.

Most of the youngest pupils in the foundation phase order pictures of snakes according to length correctly. By Year 2, many pupils use these skills effectively to measure the height of Christmas baubles. Their number skills are developing well. For example, they add numbers to 100 successfully and multiply by 10 accurately.

By Year 4, most pupils use co-ordinates successfully to create pictures of bugs. They have a good understanding of place value and use it correctly when completing written calculations. In Year 6, most pupils use a range of methods appropriately to add and subtract numbers when calculating the costs of a Christmas party.

Throughout the school, most pupils use their ICT skills effectively to support their work across the curriculum. Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase develop good independent skills. For example, they use tablet computers effectively to create an animated video showing raindrops falling from a cloud.

In key stage 2, most pupils use ICT well to present information and data in a variety of ways. For instance, they create a database showing how they would use ration coupons in the war to buy clothing. Many pupils input a series of instructions to enable an image of a rocket to move from earth to another planet successfully.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. They feel confident that staff will listen and respond sensitively to their needs. Most pupils have a sound understanding of how to stay safe online. For example, Year 2 pupils correctly identify if a website is right for them or if they should check with an adult first.

Most pupils behave well in lessons, move around the school calmly and are courteous and polite to adults. In the foundation phase, most pupils concentrate well in practical activities both indoors and outside. Throughout the school, most pupils have good social skills. In key stage 2, for instance, nearly all pupils collaborate productively, with creativity and perseverance, during group work in creative arts lessons. Older pupils support younger pupils sensibly when recording their ideas in mind maps.

Most pupils understand the importance of a balanced diet and bring healthy drinks and snacks to school. They also understand the need for physical exercise. For example, nearly all pupils enjoy the 'daily mile' and describe the positive impact it has on their fitness, health and improved concentration in the classroom. Nearly all pupils are physically active during break and lunchtimes. Many pupils in the foundation phase enjoy playground games organised and led by the school's sports ambassadors.

In key stage 2, most pupils assume responsibilities as members of school groups, such as the school council, criw Cymraeg and the eco club. They implement worthwhile initiatives in school. For example, eco club pupils remind staff not to leave lights on during 'switch off fortnight'. Pupil representatives take their roles seriously but generally rely on adults to suggest new initiatives.

Most pupils develop a good awareness of other cultures and key world events. For example, older pupils watch and discuss children's news programmes and participate in local community events such as the commemoration of the end of the First World War. As a result, they are developing a good sense of their role as citizens in their local and wider community.

Attendance rates are beginning to improve. However, pupils' attendance over the last three years does not compare well with that of pupils in other similar schools in Wales. Nearly all pupils are punctual and ready to learn at the start of the school day.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Teachers provide many interesting learning experiences that engage pupils successfully in their learning. The involvement of key stage 2 pupils in the lead creative schools programme has a strong, positive impact on their engagement in their work and provides them with many valuable opportunities to use their skills across the curriculum. For example, nearly all pupils use their speaking and listening skills productively to generate ideas for building a replica of a super structure using only newspapers.

Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to contribute their own ideas about what they would like to learn and teachers take good account of these in planning further learning experiences. When studying nocturnal animals, for example, pupils in the foundation phase suggest activities such as making houses for the animals or using tablet computers to make animations about them. The teacher then provides challenges that build on pupils' ideas, but also require them to use their measuring or ICT skills purposefully. In key stage 2, teachers provide three challenges, at increasing levels of difficulty, and pupils choose the level at which they wish to work. These approaches to involve pupils in deciding how and what they learn are recent innovations that motivate pupils well. However, in lessons in both key stages, teachers do not yet provide the right level of challenge for all pupils consistently well.

There are many purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply their speaking and listening, reading, writing and ICT skills across the curriculum. In both key stages, the regular practice of reading stories aloud to pupils has a positive impact on both their attitudes to reading and the standards pupils achieve. In the foundation phase, there is a good range of opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in practical contexts, such as writing weather reports. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work independently. Throughout the school, pupils have insufficient opportunities to use their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they could in applying their skills in real life contexts.

Visits to places of educational interest, and visitors to the school, support pupils' learning experiences well and aid their long-term recall of what they have learned. For example, pupils in the foundation phase visited Chirk castle last summer and a local resident came to share his experiences of Wales during the Second World War with pupils in key stage 2. Most pupils in both key stages remember many details about people's lives during those historical periods following these experiences.

The school promotes pupils' appreciation of the culture, literature and history of Wales effectively. For example, most pupils in key stage 2 demonstrate a good understanding of characters in the Mabinogion and the legend of Cantre'r Gwaelod. The school develops pupils' basic Welsh language skills effectively, but it does not promote their confidence in using a wider vocabulary successfully.

Working relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils are strong and have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers deploy teaching assistants well so that they can use their skills effectively to support the learning of pupils at different stages of development.

Teachers use a good range of teaching approaches and grouping arrangements to involve pupils in their learning. They take advantage of the wide age range in each class to give pupils valuable opportunities to collaborate with one another in their tasks. However, expectations of how much work pupils should complete in the time available, to an appropriate standard, vary.

Teachers give pupils clear oral and written feedback on their work so that they know what they are doing well and what they need to improve. They also give pupils time to evaluate their own and others' work, which most pupils use well to reflect on their achievements.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has a warm, supportive family atmosphere and a strong commitment to pupils' wellbeing. The headteacher and staff know individual pupils and their families very well and show great care and sensitivity when dealing with any issues or events that distress or upset them. As a result of the school's strong care and support for them, nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe and well looked after. However, inspectors brought a few safeguarding and health and safety issues to the school's attention during the inspection.

There are appropriate arrangements to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking and the benefits of physical activity. Pupils learn about the impact of lifestyle choices and behaviours on their wellbeing through a broad range of activities, such as regular teeth cleaning in the foundation phase, and their participation in the 'daily mile'.

The school identifies and caters well for pupils with additional learning needs. Teachers use the school's tracking system effectively to monitor pupils' progress and identify strengths and areas for development in its provision. For example, the school uses this information well to provide support for pupils who need extra help with their basic literacy and numeracy skills.

The additional learning needs co-ordinator works well with support staff. As a result, teaching assistants use their skills well to support pupils' learning and progress. Well-planned sessions for individuals and small groups help pupils to develop strategies to manage their emotions effectively. For example, a nurture group has a positive impact on pupils' understanding of their emotions and ability to manage their behaviour. The school has valuable partnerships with a range of outside agencies to support the needs of specific pupils and their families to overcome barriers to learning. Nearly all parents feel able to approach the school with any concerns they have about their child's progress or wellbeing.

The school has positive relationships with parents, which enable them to support their children's wellbeing and learning effectively. It keeps parents well informed about forthcoming events through social media, texts and emails. In addition, the detailed weekly newsletter advises parents about issues such as the importance of good attendance and punctuality, as well as celebrating pupils' achievements. The school informs parents effectively about new initiatives to support their children. For example, when it introduced a new approach to supporting pupils' social and emotional skills, it invited parents to a workshop to explain the concept.

The school promotes pupils' personal, social and cultural development successfully. For example, regular assemblies and whole school celebrations, such as Christmas concerts and the Eisteddfod, provide enjoyable opportunities for pupils to use their imagination and participate in performance. Acts of collective worship also raise pupils' self-esteem and their awareness of the importance of resilience when considering a fresh start at the beginning of a new year. For example, pupils in the foundation phase enjoy singing, 'I've got the power in me, you've got the power in you' to reinforce the message.

The school has a strong community ethos and pupils benefit from many contributions to their learning made by local residents. For instance, members of the community come to share a meal using vegetables the pupils have grown in the school garden. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, such as ball sports, cookery and animation clubs, which extends pupils' learning and supports their interaction with other pupils and adults.

The school's provision prepares pupils well to become active citizens. For example, all pupils contribute their own ideas when planning their learning experiences. Older pupils have many worthwhile opportunities to assume responsibility and influence decisions through pupil leadership groups, such as the school council and as digital leaders or sports ambassadors.

Leadership and management: Good

In a relatively short period of time since her appointment, the headteacher has established a clear vision for the school which she communicates effectively to staff and governors. Her vision focuses strongly on pupils' wellbeing and providing a learning community where pupils feel secure and confident as they develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

The headteacher is a good professional role model. Since her appointment, she has initiated a number of worthwhile changes aimed at raising standards. For example, teachers observe one another's lessons in order to share good practice and identify areas for improvement. This is leading to higher expectations and improved standards in important areas such as mathematics and the attainment of pupils with additional learning needs.

All members of staff have clear job descriptions and the school has suitable arrangements for them to share responsibilities for leading aspects such as the foundation phase and the provision for pupils with additional learning needs. In the foundation phase, the teacher and support staff work closely together to assess pupils' progress and plan the next steps in their learning.

Arrangements to learn from and share good practice with other local schools are developing well. For example, partnership work to develop approaches to leadership and management in rural schools has improved workload management and helped the school to implement new curriculum initiatives successfully.

Governors visit the school regularly to gather first-hand information. As a result, they know the school well and have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. They use information effectively to challenge the school on its performance and work closely with staff to secure improvement. For example, they were involved in the drive to improve pupils' extended writing in key stage 2 and in promoting pupils' physical wellbeing through the 'daily mile' fitness sessions.

The school's self-evaluation procedures identify relevant areas for improvement. These include improving specific aspects of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the quality of teaching. The school's actions to address these priorities are beginning to achieve improvements. Staff evaluate how well the school has met previous targets and identify where further improvements can be made, such as raising standards in Welsh. All staff benefit from effective performance management arrangements. These support professional learning and school improvement appropriately.

The school manages its budget efficiently. Leaders ensure that their spending decisions focus on meeting school priorities, such as enhancing pupils' ICT skills. The school uses the pupil development grant appropriately to raise the standards of vulnerable pupils. The parent teacher association raises valuable additional funds for the school, which enrich pupils' learning experiences, for example by subsidising the cost of school trips. Overall, the school manages all available resources well.

Copies of the report

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

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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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