



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

A report on

**Cwmnedd Primary School
New Street
Glynneath
Neath
SA11 5AA**

Date of inspection: June 2018

by

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

About Cwmnedd Primary School

Cwmnedd Primary School is in the village of Glynneath, in the Neath Port Talbot local authority. There are currently 217 pupils on roll aged 3 to 11, including 50 who attend the nursery part-time. The school operates on two sites. The purpose-built unit for pupils in the nursery and reception classes is on the Morfa Glas site, approximately 500 metres from the main school. There are four single-age classes in the foundation phase and three mixed-age classes in key stage 2.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is about 27%. This is above the national average of 19%. The school identifies 38% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is well above the national average of 21%. Nearly all pupils come from a white ethnic background and speak English as a first language. A very few pupils come from Welsh speaking homes.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2017. The deputy headteacher assumed his role in January 2018, following two years as the acting deputy headteacher. The school's last inspection was in November 2011.

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 happy family atmosphere where the wellbeing of all pupils and adults is at the core of its work. Members of staff know individual pupils very well and respond effectively to their personal and emotional needs to ensure their happiness and wellbeing. Overall, most pupils make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points.

Most teachers provide stimulating learning experiences that successfully capture pupils' imagination and interest. Foundation phase classrooms are hives of activity where pupils learn effectively both indoors and outside. The provision for pupils with additional learning needs is comprehensive and effective. The overall quality of teaching is good.

The headteacher provides strong, effective and purposeful leadership. She has a very clear view of relevant areas for development, which she shares successfully with staff and governors. She leads a united team who focus productively on achieving priorities for school improvement. The senior leadership team are developing their roles effectively. Governors support and challenge the school well.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all pupils make consistently good rates of progress and achieve as well as they can
- R2 Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3 Ensure consistency in the standard of handwriting and presentation throughout the school
- R4 Improve pupils' understanding of how to address specific areas for improvement in their work

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Many pupils start school with skills that are below those expected for their age. Most make good progress during the foundation phase and achieve the expected outcomes, or above. Pupil's progress slows in lower key stage 2, but increases as pupils move through the key stage. Most achieve the expected levels, or better, by the end of Year 6. Pupils with additional learning needs achieve well from their starting points. However, pupils who are more able do not always achieve as well as they could.

When they start school, pupils often lack confidence in expressing themselves. As they move through the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in their speaking skills. By Year 2, they speak at greater length and share ideas enthusiastically in activities such as making meals for pirates in the 'mud kitchen'. Most pupils sing Welsh songs and answer questions in Welsh confidently.

Most pupils in key stage 2 listen attentively to their teacher and to each other during group discussions. They particularly enjoy engaging in debates about controversial issues, such as the use of mobile phones in school. Occasionally, however, a minority of pupils in lower key stage 2 lose concentration if required to listen for extended periods. Throughout the key stage, most pupils converse confidently in Welsh using familiar language patterns.

Nursery pupils enjoy reciting phrases from favourite stories. In the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in reading for a widening range of purposes. For example, they read adverts for holidays in the class's travel agency and read recipes for making a meal for a pirate. Many apply their knowledge of sounds effectively to read unfamiliar words. However, less confident readers sometimes over-rely on this strategy and do not use other methods enough to help them understand the text. Most pupils read simple Welsh texts aloud competently and use suitable vocabulary to discuss it.

Most pupils in key stage 2 make good progress in their reading skills. They enjoy reading a range of books and conducting research on-line. Many read aloud expressively, for instance, to represent the voices of characters in a story. In upper key stage 2, many identify the literary devices authors use to create suspense, such as short sentences, rhetorical questions and ellipsis. Most pupils read Welsh texts competently. Their understanding is good, but their pronunciation is sometimes inaccurate.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in writing independently for a wide range of interesting 'real life' purposes. For example, they write invitations to parents to come to a pirate's party, reports on their trip to a supermarket and posters advertising a 'spooky disco'. Many older foundation phase pupils write extended stories, such as an alternative version of Goldilocks, using a good range of punctuation, including speech marks. They use their knowledge of phonics effectively to work out the spelling of unknown words. Most pupils' handwriting becomes increasingly neat and legible.

In lower key stage 2, the quality of handwriting and presentation is variable and pupils do not always complete their writing tasks. However, across the key stage, they write for an increasing range of relevant purposes. For example, in a science investigation in upper key stage 2, pupils write well-structured reports on how to mummify a hot dog sausage. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils use a good range of punctuation and their presentation is good. Many pupils write accurately in Welsh, for example to write a letter to a pen pal.

In the foundation phase, most pupils apply their numeracy skills effectively in many 'real life' contexts. In the reception class, for example, most pupils show a good understanding of the purpose of money when they pay for snacks in the 'Gruffalo Café'. In Year 2, they use money accurately to calculate costs. In key stage 2, most pupils develop a good grasp of number. By Year 6 the majority can calculate ratio and proportion independently. Most use a few numeracy skills well in their work, but do not apply them for a sufficient range of purposes across the curriculum.

Nearly all pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) regularly and confidently. For example, Year 2 pupils send emails to Swansea Waterfront museum to thank staff for their school trip. During key stage 2, many pupils share information with one another effectively. In Year 4, for instance, pupils create informative internet safety posters combining images and text. In Year 6, pupils use spreadsheets competently to compare temperatures between Brazil and Wales.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. For example, they know that a balanced diet and regular exercise help them keep fit and healthy. They play energetically on the yard at break times and enjoy a wide variety of games and physical activities. Many pupils participate enthusiastically in extra-curricular clubs that support healthy lifestyles, such as rugby, football, netball, tennis, gardening and a general sports club. In addition, pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 participate in the 'daily mile' and enjoy this opportunity to exercise in the fresh air. Afterwards, many say that they feel refreshed and more prepared for their lessons.

Many pupils are keen to take on responsibilities, such as prefects and playground helpers. For example, members of the 'Criw Cymreig' reward pupils they hear speaking Welsh around the school with stickers. They also maintain their own information board that displays targets for speaking Welsh around the school. Pupils with responsibilities are good role models. They take their roles seriously and are pleased to be able to help younger pupils.

Pupils voice their opinions about aspects of school life through the school forum, school council and through their responses to surveys. They feel that staff listen to them and respond to their suggestions. For example, the school council bought a black box to store the new playground equipment that pupils use so enthusiastically at break times.

Most pupils' behaviour in class, when moving around the school and during break times is good. Sometimes, however, there is some chatter and fidgetiness during whole school assemblies. The school council helped create the school rules, which are an important part of the behaviour policy. They agreed an effective new reward system called the 'DoJoMoJo' shop, where pupils choose the prize they would like to receive for good behaviour. Most pupils respond well to this opportunity.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to stay safe on-line. For example, they know they should never give away any information about themselves. Incidents of bullying are rare, but most pupils are confident that the school will deal with them effectively if they do occur. They know who to approach if they have any personal worries or concerns.

Most pupils have good social skills and are polite and welcoming to visitors. They collaborate well in shared activities, respect other pupils' points of view and like learning from one another. Nearly all pupils like and respect the adults in their school and appreciate what they do for them.

Foundation phase classrooms are hives of activity where pupils engage whole-heartedly in their learning. Most pupils focus very well on their activities independently, collaboratively and in adult-led tasks. In key stage 2, most pupils are ready to learn at the start of lessons. However, a minority of pupils in lower key stage 2 take time to settle to their tasks and do not maintain their focus throughout the lesson.

Most pupils have a good awareness of the importance of attending school regularly and arrive at school punctually. A very few pupils are persistently late or absent from school.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Teachers provide interesting learning experiences for pupils and the overall quality of teaching is good. There are positive working relationships between teachers and pupils throughout the school. A calm, purposeful climate for learning is evident in nearly all classes.

In the foundation phase, teachers demonstrate a very good understanding of how young pupils learn. Practitioners provide exciting learning experiences and use imaginative resources that capture pupils' interest successfully. In Year 2, for example, pupils use a tablet to record each other using a 'metal detector' to find and describe a pirate's treasure hidden in the sand tray. Teachers organise activities both inside and outside the classroom very well and conduct whole class discussions at a good pace. There is a good balance between adult-led and independent activities, ably supported by skilled teaching assistants.

In key stage 2, the majority of teachers usually organise lessons effectively and make good use of the time and resources available. In upper key stage 2, the use of motivating resources at the start of a lesson successfully excites pupils' curiosity and promotes thoughtful discussion and good ideas for writing. For example, the teacher showed pupils a clip from the film, 'Gravity', to stimulate discussion about how a film director creates suspense. Pupils were then able to make links between the techniques authors use to create an atmosphere of suspense, and those directors employ, and then used some of these effectively in their own writing.

Most teachers question pupils well to gauge their level of understanding. Their follow-up questions encourage longer, more considered, answers and provide good opportunities for pupils to express their ideas thoughtfully, at greater length. Teachers usually adapt tasks effectively to meet the needs and abilities of most pupils, but tasks are not always challenging enough for those of higher ability.

Teachers provide success criteria for pupils' work and give useful written feedback to them in relation to these criteria. They also provide opportunities for pupils to use the 'traffic lights' system to evaluate their own and other pupils' work. However, teachers do not always guide pupils well enough on how to address specific areas for improvement, including when pupils evaluate their own work.

Across the school, teachers plan systematically for the inclusion of relevant opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills. In the foundation phase, they also provide many purposeful activities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in practical, 'real life' contexts across all areas of learning. In key stage 2, teachers' planning of regular opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills, including reasoning and problem solving, across the curriculum is at an early stage of development.

In science lessons, teachers plan a few activities that encourage pupils to develop their investigative skills independently. For instance, in upper key stage 2, pupils investigate which materials make the best insulators for electricity. Overall, however, there are not enough practical, pupil-led investigations. The school's provision for pupils to develop and use their ICT skills to support their learning across the curriculum is developing well. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in playing musical instruments, such as trumpets, in key stage 2.

Teachers' planning and teaching of the Welsh language is good. Nearly all teachers model and encourage pupils to use Welsh during formal and informal activities effectively. The school uses local resources well to enrich pupils' awareness of their Welsh heritage. For example, the visit pupils in Years 5 and 6 made to a local Victorian gunpowder factory deepened their understanding of working life during this period of history.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has a happy family atmosphere where the wellbeing of all pupils and adults is at the core of its work. Staff know individual pupils very well and respond effectively to their personal and emotional needs to ensure their happiness and wellbeing.

The school has effective systems to track and monitor pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. The senior management team and all teachers review pupils' progress regularly. Leaders and staff use this information purposefully to provide the most appropriate support and plan next steps for learning.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is strong. The school uses a wide range of programmes that meets their needs successfully. The additional needs coordinator supports teachers and teaching assistants effectively to tailor high quality provision for individual pupils. Confident, knowledgeable support staff deliver an effective range of intervention programmes to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, specially designed reading, mathematics and speech and language programmes help pupils make beneficial progress.

The school has effective programmes to support vulnerable pupils, including those with emotional needs. These have a positive impact on raising pupils' self-esteem

and, as a result, pupils demonstrate improved levels of confidence and engagement in school life. All pupils with additional learning needs have a suitable individual education plan that includes measurable, challenging and achievable targets, which teachers review regularly with parents.

The school has a positive working relationship with most parents and informs them well about their child's progress. This helps parents to support their child's learning at home. The school's weekly newsletter, social media platforms and text messages provide parents with current and detailed information on the school's arrangements and events. The recently established parent teacher association is raising valuable funds for the school to purchase extra resources, such as new books for the library and for guided reading sessions in class.

The school promotes pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy eating and drinking well. For example, it encourages pupils to eat well-balanced packed lunches and drink water, rather than fizzy drinks. The school promotes exercise effectively through weekly physical education lessons, extra-curricular sports activities and participation in the 'daily mile'.

The school develops pupils' awareness of how to stay physically and mentally safe effectively. Pupils receive clear messages about how to ensure their personal safety when working on-line both in lessons, and through posters prominently displayed around the school. The school's safeguarding arrangements give no cause for concern.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions about aspects of school life through the pupil forum and the school council. For example, members of the pupil forum were involved in interviewing the headteacher when she applied for the post. However, pupils do not often have the opportunity to contribute their own ideas for topics they would like to study.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their awareness of their own culture through the curriculum and a wide range of educational visits in the local area. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 visited Swansea museum to learn about the pirate, Barti Ddu. The school introduces pupils successfully to Welsh literature and legends, such as the tale of Prince Llewellyn and his wolfhound, Gelert. Pupils have many enjoyable opportunities to perform and develop confidence in communicating to a wider audience through class assemblies, or by joining clubs such as the choir, drama or creative clubs.

The school develops pupils' moral and spiritual awareness well through religious education lessons, assemblies and collective worship. As a result, most pupils can explain what 'honesty' and 'fairness' mean, and many can explain key differences between religions they are studying, such as Hinduism and Christianity.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides strong, effective and purposeful leadership. She has high expectations and a resolute vision for the development of the school, which she shares energetically with all staff and governors. In the short time since her appointment, she has successfully targeted areas for improvement, which are already beginning to improve standards, for example in reading and mathematics.

An effective senior leadership team is committed to promoting stimulating learning experiences. The headteacher ensures they develop their roles successfully by leading effective performance management arrangements, training sessions and curriculum meetings. Senior leaders have a strong strategic input into all of the school's processes and procedures. They encourage a positive, caring ethos based on effective support and guidance for all members of staff and pupils.

The headteacher has recently reviewed and revised professional development arrangements. She has redefined the roles and responsibilities of teachers effectively, ensuring that their contributions have a positive impact on school improvement. There is a strong culture of teamwork and this has a positive effect on planning and professional development. For example, training sessions on the use of ICT have helped staff prepare for the implementation of the new digital competency framework. Highly effective support staff are an integral part of the team. They contribute well to improving pupils' standards, wellbeing and social skills.

There are effective self-evaluation processes, which involve all staff members, governors, parents and pupils in identifying areas for improvement. For example, the school council discusses issues with the headteacher and governors and makes recommendations, such as recent changes to the marking policy. The self-evaluation process also includes the efficient use of performance data, lesson observations, questionnaires and work scrutiny to inform improvement priorities.

The self-evaluation report is concise and evaluative and gives an honest, accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas to develop. Realistic priorities in the school improvement plan derive directly from the evidence gathered during the self-evaluation process. There are detailed targets for improvement and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness are clear.

The school has beneficial performance management arrangements for all teaching and support staff. Teachers are increasingly undertaking wider responsibilities as they develop their confidence and skills. They have access to a worthwhile range of valuable opportunities to develop their skills and professional knowledge and to share good practice with other schools. For example, a member of staff is a leader for the digital competency framework in the local cluster of schools, in addition to providing support for his colleagues. The school embraces collaboration with other schools in the cluster, and beyond, for example, to develop areas of learning such as Welsh, mathematics and the outdoor provision.

Governors have a comprehensive knowledge and thorough understanding of the school's performance. This is the result of scrutiny of relevant data, regular classroom observations and discussions about the curriculum with members of staff. They update their knowledge regularly through informative presentations from the headteacher, members of staff and pupils. Governors co-operate closely and effectively with leaders to ensure a clear strategic direction for the school. They challenge leaders successfully about the standards pupils achieve.

The school makes good use of all available resources such as books, ICT equipment and outdoor areas. However, there is a dilapidated, disused portable classroom at the back of the school with a nature reserve behind it. Unfortunately, pupils do not have access to this for health and safety reasons. At present, therefore, the school cannot exploit the potential of the reserve to enhance pupils' learning experiences.

Leaders monitor and manage expenditure prudently to maintain and improve standards and the quality of the provision. They make effective use of funds from other sources, for example, to purchase a school minibus. The school uses the pupil development grant carefully to raise the standards of those pupils who are eligible through a range of successful intervention activities. As a result, nearly all targeted pupils make good progress.

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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