



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

**A report on**

**Maesycwmmmer Primary School  
Tabor Road  
Maesycwmmmer  
Hengoed  
CF82 7PU**

**Date of inspection: April 2018**

**by**

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

## About Maesycwmmmer Primary School

Maesycwmmmer Primary School is in Maesycwmmmer, near Ystrad Mynach. The local authority is Caerphilly. There are around 185 pupils on roll, aged from three to eleven, including 29 nursery children who attend part-time. There are six mixed-age classes in the school. The school identifies around 16% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is lower than the national average (21%). A very few pupils have a statement of educational needs. The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is about 12%. This is lower than the national average (19%). Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity and very few pupils speak Welsh at home. The headteacher took up his post in September 2011. The school's last inspection was in February 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 provides a secure and supportive environment so that nearly all pupils are happy and feel safe. Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is exemplary and nearly all pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning. Staff plan and deliver a rich and engaging curriculum. They have high expectations and most pupils make good progress in developing their key skills. Most apply their literacy skills well in all areas of the curriculum, although their application of numeracy skills is not as well developed. The school ensures that pupils' wellbeing is paramount, and provides high levels of care, support and guidance. The headteacher provides strong leadership. All staff support his vision for the future of the school and are building their leadership capacity by accepting responsibility for aspects of school improvement. The school is managed and led well. There are plentiful resources and the school's building and grounds are developing into a valuable asset to promote pupils' learning.

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

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve pupils' ability to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R2 Ensure that teachers adapt their lessons to meet the needs of all pupils more closely
- R3 Refine teachers' written feedback so that pupils know more clearly what they must do to improve their work

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

About half of pupils enter the school with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are below those expected of pupils of that age. Nearly all make good progress at the school and around half make very good progress.

Many pupils begin the foundation phase with poorly developed speaking and listening skills. Most make strong progress as they move from one class to the next so that, by the end of Year 2, many listen attentively to their teacher. Many develop their expressive language skills well. They speak confidently to one another and to adults.

Pupils in key stage 2 develop their listening skills well. During discussions, they listen respectfully to the contributions of other pupils. By Year 6, most speak clearly and confidently, choosing their words skilfully to make their meaning clear.

Through the school, nearly all pupils make strong progress in reading. In the foundation phase, most pupils develop a secure grasp of the link between letters and sounds, reading familiar words clearly and using their phonics skills effectively to sound out unfamiliar words. Most pupils use picture cues well to aid their understanding of their books.

Most pupils in key stage 2 read increasingly fluently. Older pupils pay good attention to punctuation, which allows them to read aloud with lively expression. Most have a good understanding of the texts they read, and more able pupils use inference skills well, enabling them to gather more than is written explicitly. By Year 6, many pupils research non-fiction books confidently, locating specific information quickly.

The majority of foundation phase pupils form letters with consistent size and spacing, so that their writing is neat and easy to read. Most spell conventional words correctly and make sensible approximations of more difficult words. They write for many different purposes. For example, they describe their investigation into different food flavours, using appropriate words like 'sweet', 'sour' and 'bitter'. They describe the work of Welsh artists, saying that they 'make wonderful art out of natural materials'.

In key stage 2, many pupils write neatly in a wide range of genres, adapting their style to suit their purpose and intended audience. Their spelling and punctuation are generally accurate. In their imaginative writing, many use interesting vocabulary to add colour and interest. For example, they write that "The pristine lake looked peaceful and calm, sparkling and shimmering from the light of the moon."

Many pupils in the foundation phase develop a sound grasp of mathematical skills. They work neatly and accurately and make good progress. In key stage 2, most continue to improve their skills in all aspects of mathematics. They solve problems requiring more than one operation and carry out investigations methodically. For example, they explore the relationship between the areas and perimeters of various shapes. Many pupils use their graphing skills well, such as when they investigate the correlation between pupils' height and their lung capacity. Overall, however, pupils across the school apply only a narrow range of numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum.

Overall, many pupils develop their Welsh language skills very well. In the foundation phase, many pupils build a basic vocabulary about numbers, colours and the weather. In key stage 2, many pupils make strong progress, so that, by Year 6, many use Welsh competently when discussing their likes and dislikes. More able pupils perform lively scenes about the Rebecca Riots in Welsh. In key stage 2, many pupils write well in Welsh for a variety of purposes. Older pupils write interesting extended biographies, using a broad range of vocabulary and recount their experiences in the first and third person using present and past tenses.

Many pupils in the foundation phase use computers confidently. They use a range of software packages for writing and drawing and use tablet computers to read quick response codes in their study of minibeasts.

Many pupils in key stage 2 are adept at using their information and communication technology (ICT) skills for a wide range of purposes that enhance their presentations and enable them to build and interrogate databases. Pupils make imaginative use of a wide range of applications including green screen technology and virtual reality headsets. These enable pupils to become immersed in their learning, as when exploring a virtual sea bed, for example.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Nearly all pupils enjoy their time in school. Relationships between individuals and between adults and pupils are extremely positive and mutually supportive. Pupils behave well in lessons, while moving around the school, and during break times. They are polite and welcoming towards visitors and show pride when talking about their school.

Pupils concentrate well in lessons and work hard to complete their tasks. Nearly all demonstrate interest in their work and show genuine enjoyment and enthusiasm. Older pupils in particular show a mature attitude towards their learning. For example, when working in groups to make rollercoaster runs for marbles, they work harmoniously together, sharing ideas and remaining fully on task. Many pupils show great resilience and determination when striving to solve difficulties.

Across the school, pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning. They contribute their ideas regarding what and how they will learn. Teachers develop these ideas successfully. For example, pupils in lower key stage 2 recently visited Castell Coch as part of the topic they chose on 'Castles and Knights'. This leads to nearly all pupils showing a high level of interest and engagement in their work. From early on in their school life, nearly all pupils learn to work independently very effectively. Pupils in the foundation phase select investigations and suggest focused challenges for their independent work. In key stage, 2 pupils regularly work together in pairs and small groups to complete tasks.

Most pupils relish taking on various responsibilities and develop good independence. For example, older pupils support younger pupils as play leaders for the foundation phase during break times and as mentors to more vulnerable pupils through the school. The Criw Cymraeg routinely lead the Wednesday morning whole-school assembly in Welsh songs and prayers. Pupils using the Friday walking bus to come to school have decided to make posters encouraging dog walkers to pick up their waste and are putting these up along their route.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily, and they have a good understanding of the effect that this has on the body. They talk confidently about the need to take regular exercise and give the example of their daily mile as how they are doing this. Most pupils have a sound understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

The quality of teaching across the school is good and builds on successful working relationships between pupils, teachers and support staff. This creates a supportive and industrious learning environment.

Teachers across the school plan practical, stimulating and rich learning experiences, which ensure that the curriculum engages most pupils effectively. Pupils help teachers to plan exciting learning experiences, based on what they already know and what they want to learn. However, teachers do not routinely tailor their lessons well enough to meet the needs of pupils with differing abilities, or ensure that boys achieve as well as girls.

Teachers ensure that pupils are included increasingly in their learning, particularly when making decisions about topic work. For example, in the foundation phase, pupils suggest ideas linked to their topic on pirates. The school fully implements the principles of the foundation phase. A successful balance between teacher-led and pupil-initiated activities ensures appropriate opportunities for all pupils to undertake active learning. Staff make effective use of the school's resources, including the large outdoor areas, to develop the range of pupils' skills successfully.

Teachers take good account of the national literacy framework appropriately when planning pupils' learning. They identify useful opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 6 develop their descriptive writing skills successfully through their topic on Victorian Life. However, teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils to apply a range of numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Staff develop pupils' creative and independent problem solving skills effectively. Nearly all staff plan tasks that ensure pupils develop collaborative skills well. For example, more able and talented pupils work with professional actors to write, edit and produce their own movies. Most adults use effective questioning techniques to encourage pupils' problem solving.

Provision to develop pupils' understanding of Welsh language, heritage and culture is effective. For example, pupils study the work of Welsh artists. They visit Castell Coch, Tretower Court and Dan yr Ogof caves to raise their awareness suitably. A good range of Welsh displays ensure that there is a strong Welsh ethos around the school.

Worthwhile activities are planned for pupils to use a range of hardware and software and apply their ICT skills across the curriculum. For example, the Year 5 and Year 6 pupils use innovative technology to investigate the respiratory system in an engaging way.

Most teachers make effective use of a variety of teaching strategies, which ensure that pupils apply themselves fully to their work. They have a sound understanding of the requirements of the curriculum and they provide tasks and challenges that engage the pupils' interests and enthusiasm. They link their lessons effectively with previous learning, explain new concepts clearly and ensure that sessions have a good pace. Most teachers provide pupils with helpful oral feedback during lessons that enables nearly all pupils to make improvements and develop their work. Staff intervene sensitively to support pupils at appropriate times during the lesson. However, written feedback does not consistently ensure that pupils know clearly what they need to do to improve their work. Generally, pupils do not know their targets well and, as a result, they are unsure what their next steps should be. In the foundation phase, teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to assess their own performance and that of other pupils. In key stage 2, teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to select traffic light stamps to evaluate their work. All teachers assess pupils' progress on a regular basis and use an appropriate electronic system to record these assessments.

Staff supplement the curriculum well with a wide range of visits and visitors that link closely to current topics and to enhance pupils' experiences effectively. A useful number of extra-curricular activities support and extend learning opportunities well. For example, they participate enthusiastically in sports, cookery and gardening clubs. The forest school activities promote beneficial outdoor learning opportunities for pupils to raise their awareness of environmental issues successfully.

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

The school has a strong family ethos where pupils and staff show care and respect for each other. This is a notable feature of the school and promotes pupils' social development very well. As a result, pupils feel happy and safe, have high levels of self-esteem and develop positive, mature attitudes towards their learning. The school promotes pupils' cultural development successfully through art, music and drama activities. Daily acts of collective worship provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to reflect on values such as courage, friendship and kindness, thereby promoting their spiritual and moral development effectively.

Robust procedures to monitor the progress of pupils through the school ensure that teachers identify the needs of individuals and groups of pupils at an early stage. They use information effectively to identify pupils who need additional support in literacy and numeracy and provide a range of appropriate interventions that enable them to make good progress. A particular strength of the provision is the early identification of emotionally vulnerable pupils. The school has a range of highly effective strategies to support these pupils and enables them to make positive progress. Teachers provide appropriate individual education plans for specific individuals that include clear and measurable targets. Parents and pupils contribute suitably to the process of producing and reviewing them. As a result, the school ensures that these pupils make good progress against their targets.

There are many opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities in the school. Leaders and staff take pupils' ideas seriously and support their recommendations to improve their school experiences. The Pupil Voice group meets weekly. It instigates many positive improvements such as the Walking Bus, checking flowers around the school and replacing them if necessary and encouraging healthy lunch boxes. Pupils

are currently researching the cost of easy push-button taps for the foundation phase. The Pupil Voice group was also involved in the recent appointment of new staff members. The pupils organised and held their own interviews then met with governors to discuss and decide together. Other beneficial opportunities for pupils to take responsibility include playleaders from Year 6 who supervise and play with pupils in the foundation phase during break times.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. In addition to healthy lunchboxes overseen by the Pupil Voice group and the headteacher, pupils in Year 5 organise a fruit bar during morning break. They sell fruit throughout the year and have recently initiated a 'berry pot' available on Tuesdays. During the summer they move the bar outdoors and offer smoothies. This has a positive effect on pupils' understanding of issues relating to their health and wellbeing.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school, focusing strongly on ensuring the wellbeing of pupils in order that they may thrive emotionally and academically. He is supported well by an experienced senior management team and is developing the leadership capacity of staff at all levels. For example, several key members of staff have embarked on a course of professional development to refine their leadership and management skills. Additionally, the headteacher has redistributed responsibilities for aspects of school development equitably amongst members of staff. For example, staff are assigned to teams tasked with considering the school's approach to delivering the areas of learning in the forthcoming new curriculum for Wales. This contributes successfully to the strong, mutually supportive teamwork ethos across the school.

The governing body is very supportive and carries out its statutory responsibilities efficiently. Their meetings are regular and business-like, and the headteacher's detailed reports give them a secure understanding of how well the school's performance compares with that of similar schools. An annual governors' day enables members to visit classes and to speak with pupils and teachers. However, their role in challenging the school to improve is not fully developed.

Leaders contribute to a robust programme to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This, in addition to the school self-evaluation programme, ensures that underperformance by members of staff is identified quickly and dealt with robustly. The self-evaluation cycle draws on first-hand evidence from several sources, including staff, pupils and governors. Staff analyse pupil performance information carefully, observe lessons and monitor pupils' work. The headteacher collates the findings of self-evaluation in a report that gives an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. These findings directly inform a well-organised school development plan that is overseen by the deputy headteacher. The plan has a manageable number of main priorities that focus on raising outcomes for pupils. The priorities are broken down into smaller tasks, each of which has measurable success criteria, a realistic timescale and is fully costed. As such, the plan is a useful tool for bringing about improvements.

Leaders ensure valuable opportunities for staff professional development. These link directly with the school's priorities and individual staff needs. Nearly all support staff have benefited from training to support the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils. They use their expertise to support pupils with additional needs effectively. Specific training with partner schools has led to shared training on developing higher-order reading skills and ICT.

Leaders manage the school's finances efficiently. The school employs enough teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum and to support pupils effectively. The buildings and grounds are well maintained and there are sufficient resources of good quality to meet the needs of all pupils.

Leaders ensure that the school improvement priorities are funded adequately and strive to ensure that the school receives good value for money. For example, the recent improvements to the outdoor learning areas have enabled the school to adhere more closely to the principles of foundation phase. All spending decisions are approved by the governors' finance committee. They ensure that the school's reserves remain within recommended limits. The school makes good use of its pupil development grant providing support for pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

## Copies of the report

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

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

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

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

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