



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

A report on

**Porth Infants School
Mary Street
Porth
RCT
CF39 9UH**

Date of inspection: November 2017

by

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

About Porth Infants School

Porth Infants School is in Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. Currently, there are 66 pupils on roll, aged from three to seven years, including 11 nursery pupils who attend on a part-time basis. There are three mixed-age classes at the school.

About 27% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average of 19%. The school has identified around 24% of pupils as having additional learning needs.

Nearly all pupils are from a white British background. No pupils speak Welsh at home. The local authority looks after a very few pupils.

The acting headteacher took up her post in January 2017 due to the long-term absence of the headteacher. The school's last inspection was in June 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

Porth Infants School provides an extremely caring learning environment where most pupils make good progress and enjoy their learning. Adults listen to the views of pupils and take good account of them when planning activities and improving provision. This has had a positive impact on improving pupils' literacy skills, particularly their writing. Teaching is of good quality in all classes. The acting headteacher has provided strong leadership during an unsettled period for the school. All staff support her well and work together as an effective team that focuses on raising standards and providing high levels of wellbeing.

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 Develop pupils' use of numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R2 Plan improved opportunities for pupils to develop a full range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills systematically across the curriculum
- R3 Make the time when the whole school meets a better and more stimulating experience for pupils

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 developing pupils' writing skills for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most pupils start school with skills and knowledge below the level expected for their age. During their time at the school, most pupils make good progress from their starting point.

Across the school, most pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well. In nursery, they talk about what they do first and next when searching for stars outside. In Year 2, most pupils discuss their work confidently and describe pieces of work that they are proud of, giving detailed reasons about why they have selected that particular piece. They talk in extended sentences using a well-developed vocabulary. Most pupils listen carefully to adults and each other during lessons. They enjoy listening to stories and hearing the news of other pupils.

Younger pupils generally make good progress in developing early reading skills and show an interest in books and stories. They join in enthusiastically with a range of songs and rhymes. Most older pupils develop effective reading skills. They read with increasing fluency and take good account of punctuation. They are eager to read what they have written to visitors and self-correct when they realise that what they have read does not make complete sense. They make good use of their knowledge of phonics to decode new and unfamiliar words. They know how to find information in non-fiction texts using a contents page and index.

Most pupils make strong progress in developing their writing skills across the curriculum. They are keen to write and many choose writing activities in their free play. Pupils in nursery enjoy mark-making activities and use a range of equipment effectively, such as paint, chalk, sand and pencils to practise their early writing skills demonstrating increasing control. In reception and Year 1, many pupils begin to write sentences independently with good pencil control. They use what they have learned through oral storytelling to vary the start of their sentences to make their writing more interesting. Many pupils in Year 2 use a wide range of descriptive words and are often adventurous in their choice of vocabulary. Pupils that are more able generally use punctuation accurately throughout their work. As they move through the school pupils produce extended writing of good quality. Many pupils make good attempts at spelling new and unfamiliar words through applying their knowledge of phonics.

Most pupils develop their mathematical skills well. In the nursery, most pupils recite a range of number rhymes and count objects up to ten in English and Welsh with increasing confidence. Most pupils build very well on their number skills as they move through the school and have a strong understanding of relationships between numbers. By Year 2, pupils use a range of measuring and data handling skills effectively in their mathematics. Most pupils have a good understanding of the language of mathematics and use their literacy skills well to help them to read and interpret word problems. For example, they identify different shapes from reading about their properties. Most pupils apply their mathematical skills to problem solving effectively. Overall, pupils' ability to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum is less well developed.

Most pupils develop appropriate skills in ICT. By the end of Year 2, they make use of a range of resources and applications to support their learning well. For example, pupils look for relevant information about historical figures such as Guy Fawkes using an internet search engine. They also instruct a programmable device to negotiate its way around a grid successfully.

Most pupils develop their Welsh language skills well. In nursery, they respond appropriately to instructions showing that they have understood. They count in Welsh confidently. Most older pupils ask and answer simple questions and sustain a short conversation. They use the patterns they have learned around the school confidently, for example when delivering messages.

Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress towards their targets, particularly in developing their literacy skills. Pupils eligible for free school meals generally perform as well as other pupils.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Standards of wellbeing are high. All pupils enjoy coming to school and are confident when in the school environment. They feel safe and nearly all display a caring attitude to each other.

Nearly all pupils show respect and consideration for each other and for their teachers. They are polite and behave well in lessons and around school. They are confident that adults will listen to their opinions and they take pride in improving their school environment through looking after the forest school and outdoor areas. Many pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and play a full part in school life. For example, the school council has been involved in buying toys for wet playtimes.

Pupils understand the benefits of keeping fit and eating healthily. They are excited about physical activities and enjoy taking part in physical education lessons and games at playtimes. For example, they show great enthusiasm when making slow and fast firework movements during a dance lesson. Many pupils take part actively in community club activities such as folk dancing, sport, choir, tennis, cooking and charity work.

Most pupils talk about their work confidently, and their attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Nearly all pupils settle to their work quickly and purposefully knowing where to get resources to assist them in their learning. They interact well with each other in lessons and work collaboratively, showing respect for each other. Many pupils are keen to try new things and are eager to learn. They engage confidently in new experiences and persevere in finding answers. Their ability to sustain concentration for appropriate periods is good. They engage quickly in tasks and complete them well. Many pupils demonstrate respect for the contributions of others, for example allowing others to answer questions without interrupting them.

Pupils' attendance has placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools for the past four years. Nearly all pupils are punctual.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching across the school is good. Teachers provide stimulating activities that capture pupils' interests. For example, they use an exciting poem about shapes to lead into a mathematical activity. All staff have a good understanding of foundation phase pedagogy and there is an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-initiated tasks. Learning proceeds at a suitable pace for the intended activity and staff know when to stand back and when to intervene to extend pupils' learning.

All staff develop very positive and supportive working relationships with pupils, enabling them to take risks in their learning and try new activities with confidence. They manage pupils' behaviour consistently and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Adults make effective use of questioning to extend pupils' thinking skills. They provide interesting challenges for pupils to solve problems, such as working out how to measure the size of collar they need to make for different pets.

Teachers talk to pupils about their work to make sure that they know what they have done well and how they can improve. They set suitable targets for pupils to work on and give them good opportunities to do this. For example, pupils practise writing numbers correctly in their target books.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and pays appropriate attention to all foundation phase areas of learning. Teachers take good account of pupils' views when planning themes and adapt their planning well to follow pupils' interests. For example, a topic about nocturnal animals turned into a study of space after the pupils talked about day and night and wanted to look at stars and planets. The school is on a steep slope and due to the design and age of the building, there is no direct access to outside space. Adults make suitable use of the space available and there are appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors, such as when they use the forest school area to make mud monsters.

Teachers plan very effective opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. After identifying that pupils were not writing often enough during child-initiated activities, they asked the pupils how they could improve the provision to encourage them to write. The pupils wanted a quiet environment where others could not disturb them. One class decided that they would like a forest writing house with a garden for sharing and listening to stories. Providing these areas has had a positive impact on the amount and quality of writing that pupils produce. Teachers plan for pupils' mathematical development well, but opportunities to develop numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum are less well developed.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is good. Adults use Welsh regularly for classroom instructions and routines. There are planned times for pupils to practise language patterns and adults expect them to use these patterns during the day for specific activities. Teachers take good account of Welsh heritage and culture when planning the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about the work of a range of Welsh artists and musicians and visit places of interest within Wales, such as The Museum of Welsh Life and Cardiff Castle.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides an extremely caring environment and there is a purposeful sense of community. All pupils take part in the full range of school activities.

Pupils are encouraged to develop positive attitudes to learning and resilience. Emphasis on wellbeing is strong. For example, younger children work to fill their 'buckets' full of kindness, happiness and respect and younger pupils take part in a 'reach for the stars' warm up in preparation for learning. The rainbow award system encourages older pupils to work together, to be kind and helpful.

Provision for pupils who need additional support is strong and the school uses a range of effective programmes and strategies to meet their needs. Individual plans track the progress of pupils with additional needs well in relation to targets set. Teachers use assessment information successfully to inform planning and this has a particularly positive impact on those who need support. Learning assistants deliver a range of wellbeing and literacy interventions that support pupils' learning effectively. The school offers useful support and advice to parents about how best to help their children's learning and development. For example, staff meet more often with parents whose children are finding it difficult to settle in school.

The school establishes productive relationships with parents and has effective lines of communication with them. Staff keep parents well informed about their child's progress through regular parents' meetings and comprehensive school reports. The school holds a number of parent sessions to help parents support learning. For example, there are workshops that give advice about home reading, phonics and developing number skills.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Staff encourage pupils to eat healthily at breakfast club, make fruit smoothies and healthy picnics and bring healthy lunch boxes. Extra-curricular activities provide good opportunities for pupils to participate in physical sessions, such as sport club. There are also many worthwhile opportunities for visits and visitors to enhance pupils' understanding of themes and environmental issues, for example through visits to an environmental centre, bakers, local café, police station, library and recycling centre.

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to reflect in sessions where the whole school comes together based on school values, spiritual, moral and cultural themes. However, the delivery of these sessions is not always stimulating and does not capture pupils' interest and, as a result, they become restless.

The school has suitable procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing. The tracking of progress from baseline to the end of foundation phase is effective and contributes to raising the attainment of nearly all pupils. Regular staff meetings and discussions about pupils' progress ensure that all staff know what they need to do to improve outcomes for pupils, particularly those who are at risk of underachievement.

There are effective arrangements to maintain high levels of pupils' attendance. The school operates a late book, initial contact system and has an attendance action plan

that makes sure that pupils and parents are aware of the importance of attending regularly. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The acting headteacher has maintained the strong leadership of the school in the absence of the substantive headteacher. All staff support her ably to ensure that pupils make good progress and receive high standards of care. Together, the whole school community work as a strong team for the benefit of all pupils. They make sure that wellbeing is at the heart of the school community. All staff have clear roles and responsibilities and understand their role in securing improvements in pupils' standards and wellbeing. This is a strength of the school.

Self-evaluation processes are well developed, rigorous and consider a wide range of direct evidence such as data analysis, lesson observations, learning walks, looking at pupils' work and listening to parents, staff and governors through questionnaires. Staff listen to pupils' views regularly, take their opinions and ideas seriously and consider them thoroughly when making whole school decisions and evaluating school processes. For example, pupils' views formed an integral part of the process of developing the successful writing huts. Staff make good use of all self-evaluation information to identify whole-school improvement priorities and to keep progress against these priorities under review. There is a close link between the outcomes of the self-evaluation report and priorities in the development plan. The plan details relevant and measurable actions for improvement.

The governing body is supportive of the work of the school and has a sound knowledge of its context, strengths and areas for improvement. Governors challenge the school on issues, such as the standards that pupils achieve, but also understand the implications of small cohorts of pupils. They take an active interest in their areas of responsibility and visit the school regularly, helping whenever possible, such as with outdoor woodland activities.

The acting headteacher provides valuable professional learning opportunities for all staff within and beyond the school. All staff have visited other local schools to see and share good practice. By doing so, they have benefited from opportunities to share experiences and good practice to improve provision and raise standards. For example, a teacher has developed a partnership with a colleague in another school to evaluate each other's work and to undertake joint observations of the teaching of phonics.

The school collaborates closely with another infant school and the junior school that they both feed to ensure consistency in teacher assessment. They have also begun to prepare for the closure of the schools and the transfer of pupils to the new school. They engage in a range of activities, such as performing in a joint concert and hosting coffee mornings for parents of all schools involved in the proposed amalgamation. Teachers have visited both schools to begin to work more closely with other staff and to aid the closure and transition process.

Performance management is robust and develops staff knowledge, skills and expertise. The acting headteacher ensures that professional learning of teachers

and teaching assistants is a priority. As a result, teachers are well informed of current teaching practices and developments. Teaching assistants feel well respected and part of the team, and they support specific groups of pupils successfully.

The school focuses appropriately on a number of national priorities including the development of literacy, numeracy and reducing the adverse effect of poverty on pupils' standards and wellbeing. The school makes effective use of the pupil development grant to ensure that the needs of pupils eligible for free school meals are met effectively, such as purchasing a reading resource and training teaching assistants to administer it successfully.

There are effective arrangements to manage the school's finances and resources. Staff work creatively to enhance provision by securing a number of additional grants, such as using lottery funding to provide a stimulating and effective outdoor reading area.

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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