



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

A report on

**St Cenydd School
St Cenydd Road
Trecenydd
CF83 2RP**

Date of inspection: November 2019

by

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

About St Cenydd School

St Cenydd School is an English-medium 11-19 comprehensive school, maintained by Caerphilly County Borough Council. It serves the town and the surrounding area and there are currently 1,043 pupils on roll. The school hosts a local authority specialist resource base catering for pupils with significant sensory learning difficulties and complex physical and medical special needs. It also hosts a satellite class from a nearby special school. The school was last inspected in 2013.

Around 24.0% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average of 16.4%. Around 40% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. Very few pupils represent a range of ethnic minority groups. Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language and no pupils speak Welsh at home. The school receives pupils from the full ability range. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is around 32%, well above the national average of 23%. The percentage of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is around 4%, almost double the national average of 2.2%.

The current headteacher took up post in April 2014. The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, one deputy headteacher, four assistant headteachers and the business manager.

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

St Cenydd School has a warm, nurturing and inclusive ethos. It fosters well pupils' sense of community and belonging. In particular, pupils learn to value and respect each other's contribution to school life as a result of careful integration with the specialist resource centre and close work with a local special school.

Leaders regard for the wellbeing and professional learning of staff is a strong feature. They have focused successfully on improving the quality of teaching and inclusion through the provision of high-quality professional learning experiences. Consequently, relationships between staff and pupils are purposeful and strong. Provision for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and the ongoing evaluation of this aspect of the school's work, is developing suitably.

The sensitive support and beneficial guidance provided by the school ensure that nearly all pupils thrive. Many make strong progress from their starting points during their time at the school, particularly the more able and those with special educational needs (SEN).

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 Improve provision for the development of pupils' skills across the curriculum
- R2 Strengthen arrangements for evaluating and securing improvement in pupils' standards and progress in skills

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

The nurturing and supportive conditions for learning in St Cenydd ensure that most pupils make sound progress in their learning. Many pupils recall prior learning well. In particular, pupils with special education needs, including those in the specialist resource base, and more able pupils make strong progress.

In many cases, pupils develop their subject knowledge and understanding well. Many pupils are able to apply their prior learning successfully. Examples include pupils comparing creation stories from different religions thoughtfully, and using their knowledge of computer coding successfully to produce their own websites.

Most pupils listen to the teacher and their classmates with due attention and respect. Many respond clearly to their teachers' questions and a few give extended, well-reasoned explanations. During question and answer sessions, a minority of pupils provide only brief verbal responses, and usually only expand on these when prompted to do so by the teacher.

When given an appropriate opportunity, many pupils read aloud fluently with suitable intonation. They read purposefully to locate and extract information from a variety of sources. A majority of pupils use inference suitably to enhance their understanding of a writer's intentions, for example when considering the use of propaganda in World War II. However, in general pupils do not develop their higher order reading skills well enough.

Across the curriculum, most pupils write suitably for a range of purposes and many produce worthwhile pieces of extended writing. In history, for example, pupils write persuasive letters to a sugar producer to challenge their biased portrayal of the conditions for slaves on plantations. A majority of pupils write with sound technical accuracy and use subject specific terminology appropriately. A minority of pupils are over-reliant on prompts offered by the teachers, and as a result they do not develop their ability to write independently well enough. A few do not communicate their ideas with sufficient clarity. Many pupils redraft their work effectively when given specific direction, such as when writing explanatory text regarding Jewish beliefs about God.

In general, pupils develop their numeracy skills well in relevant subjects. Many carry out straightforward calculations proficiently and plot a variety of graphs accurately, particularly in science. Over time these pupils make substantial progress in their ability to plot graphs. In a few cases, they use their higher order skills successfully, such as when considering and comparing the large distances in the solar system using standard form.

Nearly all pupils develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well in a few subjects across the curriculum, for example when designing computer games and making their own animations in art. When given the opportunity, many pupils use specialised programmes purposefully, for example 3D design software in design technology. However, they do not develop their ICT skills well enough across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop their physical skills well in their games and physical education sessions. In addition, they develop their fine motor skills successfully in their design and technology and science lessons, for example when measuring small quantities of chemicals and manipulating scientific equipment.

Pupils with SEN make strong progress against worthwhile targets and many achieve well by the end of key stage 4, including those in the specialist resource base.

Most pupils are entered for a GCSE qualification in Welsh and many gain a level 2 qualification. Many pupils have an appropriate grasp of phrases to express simple opinions in Welsh and a majority of pupils make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills in their Welsh lessons. Pupils use Welsh confidently to greet visitors. A majority of pupils successfully complete the skills challenge certificate at level 2.

During the last three years, pupils' performance has generally compared favourably with that in other schools in key stage 4. Performance in 2019 including the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals is generally in line with expectations. Performance in the sixth form has improved over time and in 2019 is consistent with that expected. At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils remain in full time education either in the school or a further education college.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and most pupils feel that the school deals well with any incidents that arise. Most appreciate the strong support that they receive in the school's sensitive and nurturing environment.

Most pupils behave well during lessons and at break and lunch times. They are polite and courteous to one another and to staff and visitors.

Most pupils display positive attitudes to their learning. They arrive promptly to lessons and are well prepared and ready to work. Many pupils show a genuine interest in the topics that they study and display pride in their work. Most pupils settle to their work promptly and show diligence when completing tasks. They work well together in pairs and groups and support each other effectively. Many pupils develop a strong sense of empathy and a greater understanding of diversity through interactions with their peers in the specialist resource base and satellite class from the local special school.

In many subjects, pupils respond constructively to feedback from the teacher.

Most pupils engage enthusiastically when undertaking class tasks and activities, for example when playing chords on the ukulele and creating contemporary tunes on their instruments.

Many pupils have a positive attitude towards maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The majority take regular exercise through participating in the broad range of sporting activities on offer at lunchtimes and after school, for example football, rugby, netball, and gymnastics. Pupils benefit from varied opportunities to take part in creative extra-curricular activities, such as the art and computer clubs.

Pupils make a useful contribution to influencing aspects of school life, for example through the work of the school 'Senedd'. These pupils have influenced changes in the school, for example in ensuring improvements to the changing rooms and including drama and Spanish as curriculum options.

Many pupils show care and concern for others through their participation in community fundraising activities. For example, they participate in a local art community project, 'Building bridges across the generations' and have raised funds for a range of charities including 'Children in Need', 'Latch' and 'Young Minds'. These activities help them to develop their social and life skills well.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

A notable feature of the teaching at St Cenydd school is the strong working relationships that exist between staff and pupils. Nearly all teachers have secure subject knowledge and most have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Teachers deal sensibly and effectively with the very few incidences of poor behaviour.

Many teachers plan their lessons well with suitably challenging objectives and tasks to ensure that pupils make progress. They use a wide range of teaching approaches and beneficial resources to engage pupils successfully in learning. They deliver their lessons in a calm and purposeful manner. These teachers have suitably high expectations of the quality of work that they expect of pupils. They give pupils clear explanations, helpful demonstrations and useful success criteria.

Nearly all teachers are strong language role models and pay due attention to the accurate use of subject specific vocabulary. The majority provide pupils with helpful opportunities to practise and develop their literacy skills in subjects outside of their English lessons. Where this is done particularly well, teachers provide valuable support to meet the literacy demands of their subjects. For example, they support pupils to evaluate the texts that they read in Welsh Baccalaureate or to improve the content, purpose and quality of their extended writing.

In a few subjects, pupils have helpful opportunities to construct and interpret graphs and charts. In these cases, teachers provide pupils with valuable opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in worthwhile contexts, such as when they calculate averages, surface area and speed and rates of reaction in science.

In the specialist resource base, teaching is particularly effective in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Most teachers in mainstream lessons make valuable use of teaching assistants to meet the needs of specific pupils. However, a few teachers do not consider the learning needs of the range of pupils in their lessons well enough.

In a few lessons, there are weaknesses in planning and expectations are too low. Teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient challenge and they do not plan to build on pupils' prior learning well enough. In these lessons the pace of learning is too slow, often because the teacher manages the activity too closely to allow the pupils to develop their learning independently.

Nearly all teachers provide helpful verbal feedback to pupils in lessons. Many question pupils well to check their knowledge and comprehension. The majority of teachers use questioning skilfully to encourage pupils to think or to probe and develop their understanding. This enhances their learning well. However, a minority of teachers do not probe pupils' understanding and develop thinking well enough. Many teachers provide helpful written feedback that explains what pupils should improve and how they could achieve this. In many cases, they ensure that pupils respond appropriately to this feedback. In a minority of cases, teachers do not explain to pupils how they should improve their work clearly enough or set follow-up tasks that are not sufficiently challenging.

Overall, the school provides a balanced and relevant curriculum that provides well for the needs of most pupils. However, for a few pupils, such as for those with special educational needs, the choice of options at key stage 4 is narrow.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities that enhance learning purposefully. This includes participation in 'Techno Camp' workshops, the Shakespeare Schools Festival, and rocket building challenges in partnership with the UK Youth Rocket Challenge. These events successfully capture the interest of pupils and help to bring the curriculum to life in authentic contexts.

The school has beneficial arrangements in place to support pupils to progress from key stage 2 to key stage 3. For example, it has worked successfully in partnership with their cluster primaries to help develop pupils' reading skills. Most pupils are given appropriate guidance around option choices at key stage 4 and in the sixth form, for example through pupil interviews and assemblies. This is supported suitably by a coherent careers programme.

The school has prioritised suitably the development of skills as an integral part of its teaching and learning development. Skills co-ordinators have developed a wide range of helpful strategies and guidance to develop pupils' thinking, oracy and writing. They have set out and shared consistent approaches to the delivery of numeracy skills. These strategies are supported appropriately by training and high-quality resources. This work has helped the majority of staff to support the development of pupils' skills suitably. However, a minority of teachers do not use these strategies to develop pupils' skills consistently. A beneficial range of interventions helps pupils with weaker skills to improve their literacy and numeracy skills successfully.

Pupils are given opportunities to learn about the culture of Wales and the history of the local area, for example through registration activities that celebrate Santes Dwynwen's Day and remember the Senghenydd colliery disaster. Pupils are also given opportunities to enrich their learning of the Welsh language through residential trips to Llangrannog and Glan Llyn.

Care, support and guidance: Good

St Cenydd Community School is a caring community that prioritises wellbeing and promotes inclusivity well. The school provides valuable support and guidance to all pupils including those with special educational, emotional, health and social needs. School staff know the pupils well and make beneficial use of this knowledge to foster positive working relationships with them and their families.

The school is successful in developing pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural values, which are fundamental to all aspects of school life. Common values reflected in the school's motto 'Ready, Respect, Safe' are successfully reinforced through the purposeful Principles of Excellent Learning programme. The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to reflect on spiritual and moral issues through tutor led registrations, assemblies and religious education lessons. A relevant and well co-ordinated personal and social education programme enables pupils to make positive decisions regarding their own health and wellbeing. The school has appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking.

Staff are skilful in supporting the health and wellbeing of their pupils. They work effectively with external agencies such as theatre groups and minority ethnic organisations to ensure a co-ordinated approach to developing tolerance and respect. The school takes positive approaches to ensure that there are very few incidents of bullying. When the very few incidents occur, they are recorded and followed up appropriately. Responsive school strategies successfully reduce the impact on pupils' health and wellbeing of deprivation and disadvantage. The nurture room provides a safe and calm environment for vulnerable pupils, and staff co-ordinate successfully a menu of helpful interventions and support services.

The school gathers useful data systematically to track and monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of different groups of pupils. Teachers make valuable use of this information to identify pupils that require additional support and they provide a range of beneficial and creative interventions to support them. The school celebrates pupils' achievements well, for example through the valued headteacher's award.

Purposeful and personalised interim and annual reports keep parents well informed. They highlight pupils' achievements and attitudes to learning clearly and provide valuable targets for their next steps in learning.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is strong. Staff receive valuable support from the special educational needs coordinator and are provided with beneficial strategies for supporting these pupils in their lessons. However, in a minority of cases teachers do not implement these strategies within their teaching and planning effectively enough. The school houses a successful learning resource base as well as a satellite specialist class from Trinity Fields Special School. All pupils benefit from this provision as it develops their understanding of disability through meaningful opportunities for pupils to learn together. The school identifies individual pupils' needs well through effective transition processes and baseline assessment information. Learning plans contain relevant targets and strategies to promote achievement and progress.

The school provides comprehensive advice and guidance for pupils and their parents at transition points to help them make informed choices about learning and career pathways. A suitable range of extra-curricular activities, including sporting and cultural clubs such as the signing choir, enrich pupils' experiences. Pupils with special educational needs are able to participate in all aspects of school life and are involved fully in decision-making groups.

The school Senedd contributes positively to improvements to school life, for example through the rewards and sanctions systems and improvements to sporting facilities.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides strong, sensitive and dignified leadership. She has a clear vision based on putting pupils first, expressed through the school's mission of 'aspire and achieve'. Nearly all staff and the governing body share and endorse this vision fully and are highly committed to ensuring all pupils achieve well, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is a highly nurturing ethos in the school, where the wellbeing of pupils and staff are high priorities.

Senior leaders work well as a team. Their roles are distributed sensibly, with a close focus on the school's improvement priorities. Nearly all leaders ensure that teachers understand the rationale for whole-school policies and follow them consistently. Many middle leaders carry out their roles well especially in improving outcomes in examinations. However, a few do not have a full enough understanding of strategic aspects of their role, particularly regarding the development of pupils' skills.

School activities and procedures are very well organised. A carefully planned schedule of meetings results in useful actions with clear responsibility for their timely completion. The school has robust line management arrangements and senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. However, a few subject leaders do not have a firm understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching in their departments.

Governors play an appropriate role in self-evaluation, improvement planning and monitoring the school's progress against its key priorities. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide the school with valuable challenge and support.

The school has a wide range of self-evaluation activities to gather first-hand information about standards, the quality of teaching and pupils' wellbeing. As a result, leaders have a sound understanding of most of the strengths and areas for improvement across the school. However, in general, leaders do not identify precisely enough the aspects of pupils' skills that need improvement.

School leaders have high aspirations for pupils and set ambitious goals. They plan thoroughly and thoughtfully to secure improvement. The actions they have undertaken have resulted in improvements in many aspects of school life. These include improvements in outcomes in key stage 4 in 2019 and in vocational courses in the sixth form, high levels of pupil wellbeing, reductions in staff absenteeism, and the elimination of a budget deficit. The school's planning has been less successful in bringing about improvements in aspects of pupils' skills.

The majority of subject leaders have a suitable understanding of the skills that need improvement in their areas of responsibility and plan appropriately to improve these. However, a minority of subject leaders do not identify areas for improvement in skills precisely enough. In general, pastoral leaders have a strong understanding of the emotional and academic needs of pupils. They evaluate thoroughly the impact of strategies on pupils' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning. Many subject leaders use information from examination boards to plan for specific improvements in their provision well.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on supporting professional learning and nearly all staff engage well with development activities. Leaders identify expertise within the school and deploy specific staff to support others and share good practice. Leaders have fostered useful links with other schools to offer staff valuable opportunities to discuss teaching ideas and develop their practice. All teachers are involved with worthwhile professional enquiry, closely related to the school improvement priorities.

The school's 'principles of excellent teaching' programme encourages teachers to experiment with a comprehensive range of stimulating ideas to include in their lessons. Over the last three years, this has widened teachers' repertoire of teaching strategies beneficially. The school's professional learning programme has developed suitably teachers' understanding of how to improve pupils' skills. However, this understanding is not routinely or consistently applied in a minority of teachers planning.

Performance management procedures are rigorous and identify training needs effectively. Appropriate staff performance objectives match the priorities of the school closely. In general, leaders identify any underperformance suitably. They deal with this robustly and offer appropriate support.

The school business manager, headteacher and governors control spending wisely. They have been successful in eliminating a budget deficit. Spending decisions link well to the school's priorities and that there is a suitable programme for maintaining the school site. Teachers are well qualified and nearly all teach subjects in their main area of expertise.

Leaders make effective use of grants. They have targeted the use of the pupil development grant well. This has had a beneficial impact on the wellbeing of pupils eligible for free school meals and a suitable impact on their outcomes in key stage 4.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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' wellbeing, 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)

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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