



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

**A report on**

**Llwydcoed Primary**

**Corner House Street  
Llwydcoed  
Aberdare  
RCT  
CF44 0YA**

**Date of inspection: February 2023**

**by**

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

## About Llwydcoed Primary

Name of provider	Llwydcoed Primary
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	125
Pupils of statutory school age	91
Number in nursery classes	21
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.0%)	29%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	05/04/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	02/06/2014
Start date of inspection	06/02/2023

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection. Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: [mylocalschool.gov.wales](https://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

## Overview

Pupils at Llwydcoed Primary School enjoy attending school. They are keen to talk to adults and speak confidently about how proud they are of their school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, and they trust that adults will always support them through difficult times. As they move through the school, most pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points and use their knowledge and skills effectively in their work across the curriculum. The school genuinely values the pupils' opinions. They have frequent opportunities to influence the work of the school and are delighted to work alongside school leaders to bring about improvements.

Across the school, pupils develop positive attitudes to reading and writing and enjoy many opportunities to be physically active. They use digital tools effectively to support their learning and develop good mathematical and Welsh language skills. Teachers work with their pupils to plan learning experiences that capture their interests. These experiences allow pupils to explore the issues that are important to them, such as staying healthy and sustainability. Pupils are keen to do well and to take on new challenges. However, the over scaffolding of a few literacy and numeracy activities constrains pupils' ability to respond creatively and to direct their own learning.

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school's ethos and all staff work hard to make sure that the school is a thoughtful and inclusive environment. This togetherness is demonstrated by the positive working relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers think carefully about how pupils learn best and use a range of methods to engage them successfully in their learning. All staff develop their professional skills and knowledge together well, and this enables them to adjust provision to meet the needs of individual pupils. The standard of care, support and guidance provided across the school community is strong and underpins the school's vision, to empower children to achieve highly.

The headteacher shows strong and considerate leadership. Along with the support of school leaders and governors, she has developed an enthusiastic team of professionals, who have a strong understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local community. Partnerships with parents are robust and the school has earned their confidence. These partnerships prove particularly beneficial when leaders and staff are deciding the right approaches to adopt so that their pupils can prosper. Leaders and staff are well on their way to implementing a curriculum that is authentic and reflects the needs of the community. Overall, school leaders and governors keep the work of the school under close review and there are good arrangements for monitoring the quality of ongoing school improvements.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Extend opportunities for pupils to respond creatively and make more independent choices about their learning
- R2 Strengthen provision for more able pupils to ensure that they are suitably challenged

## **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 reducing the cost of the school day and providing additional support for low-income families in the community, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Across the school, most pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points. They use their knowledge understanding and skills in their work across the curriculum very effectively.

Pupils' oracy skills are strong. Nearly all pupils listen carefully and pay close attention to what their peers and adults have to say. They ask thoughtful questions that extend their ideas and make effective contributions that take other pupils' views into account. Pupils express themselves clearly from an early age. They talk enthusiastically and with understanding about their work. By Year 6, most pupils are articulate and mature speakers. They moderate their tone, expression and language depending on the audience. They develop conversations well.

Younger pupils develop good phonic knowledge and use this well to help them to read. Nearly all pupils develop effective reading skills and, by the end of Year 3, they read a range of suitable texts accurately and fluently. Many older pupils become confident, fluent and expressive readers. They have a good grasp of a wide range of genres and use their literacy skills successfully to understand the meaning of increasingly challenging vocabulary. They think maturely about what they have read and make thoughtful inferences and deductions.

Pupils' development as writers is strong. Most write successfully to communicate in literacy lessons and across the curriculum. Nearly all pupils take great care to present their written work neatly, with pride, and in a consistent format. Many of the youngest pupils develop their early writing skills effectively through playing well-designed activities to practise their gross motor skills and by mark making in a variety of mediums. As they progress through the school, pupils plan their writing effectively. For example, pupils in Year 4 write a reflective evaluation of a science experiment in which they attempted to attract slugs and snails using food scraps. Older pupils grasp a clear understanding of different genres and write for a variety of purposes, for example to discuss or persuade. They apply their writing skills across the curriculum highly successfully.

Most pupils develop their Welsh language skills well. Younger pupils sing songs in Welsh enthusiastically and understand and respond to teachers' instructions appropriately. Many pupils respond confidently in Welsh when asked questions. Younger pupils write simple sentences in Welsh describing the clothes they wear and who they live with. Year 3 and 4 pupils ask and answer questions well when talking about the weather and their families. Older pupils speak more confidently using extended sentences in different situations, such as when talking about their likes and dislikes.

Across the school, most pupils develop a strong understanding of the different areas of mathematics. In all year groups, pupils use their mathematical skills competently and confidently in lessons. The youngest pupils enjoy counting, recite number rhymes enthusiastically and achieve a firm grasp of numbers and their value. For example, they calculate one more or one less using cubes. In Years 2 and 3, most

pupils consolidate their skills effectively, developing their understanding of even and odd numbers, including examples over a thousand. Older pupils contrast the features of different line graphs drawn on the same axes. Most apply their mathematical knowledge and skills successfully across the curriculum. Most build upon previous learning. For example, the oldest pupils use their knowledge of area to calculate the size of the footprint of air raid shelters used during the Blitz.

Most pupils build a good range of creative skills as they move through the school, and they use them in a range of activities across the curriculum during independent activities and when learning outdoors. For example, younger pupils create rocket ships from cardboard and sticks whilst outdoors. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 create characters out of clay and record an animation using a digital app. Older pupils research and create their own depiction of the Berlin wall using recycled materials.

Most pupils use digital equipment confidently and develop their digital skills appropriately as they move through the school. From a young age, they use their digital skills constructively in a range of learning experiences. For example, in Year 1, they programme a toy to move around a path and use apps to support their learning. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 use tablet computers as dictionaries and record themselves speaking. Most older pupils use their digital skills well to support independent research and present their findings through creative presentations.

Most pupils' physical skills are developing well. The younger pupils practise their skills through a range of purposeful activities. For example, they develop their gross motor skills when attempting to balance on 'snakes' and their fine motor skills when playing 'finger football'. Older pupils build on these skills appropriately through varied opportunities to explore the outdoors, as part of the curriculum and during playtimes.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Most pupils feel safe and happy at school. They enjoy coming to school and are eager to learn. Nearly all pupils greet visitors in a friendly manner and are proud of their school. They show high levels of support and care for one another, and their behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes and around the school is exemplary.

Most pupils understand the importance of physical exercise and take part in activities in the classroom, during break times and in after-school clubs, such as football or netball. They participate fully in health and well-being sessions that help them to understand and manage their emotions. For example, Year 6 pupils identify a hierarchy of feelings and the corresponding behaviours, from the least extreme to the most extreme, and record them on a "volcano of feelings" diagram.

Most pupils know how to keep healthy and learn about healthy diets. Older pupils compare different healthy diets from around the world, for example in Iceland, Italy and Japan, and examine different food categories that make up a healthy plate. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and know that they should talk to a trusted adult if issues arise. They have a sound understanding of the strategies to use, for instance when searching for information, and know how to keep their personal details safe. The school's focus on emotional well-being supports pupils to understand the importance of mental health. Nearly all pupils say that the school's values help them to treat people fairly.

Pupils benefit from being part of a wide variety of leadership groups and this helps to develop their confidence and leadership skills. For example, the Rights Respecting Rangers hold regular assemblies to ensure that pupils are aware of their rights and what they mean. In addition, to encourage friendship, care and mutual support, they have set up and organised a buddy stop in the playground. Pupils also created an effective yard contract to encourage their peers to help each other out when times are tough. The Healthy Schools Gang promote hand washing across the school and arranged for a local dentist to visit younger children in school and show them how best to look after their teeth.

Younger pupils show good levels of independence and enjoy contributing to their learning. They plan 'Amser Enfys' alongside staff for all areas across the curriculum. As a result, pupils understand what activities need to be completed, and use the inside and outside of their classrooms effectively. Older pupils enjoy working independently on specific assignments, for example six tasks linked to their topic work to be completed over a few weeks. Most pupils approach these tasks eagerly and are keen to succeed. When given opportunities, many pupils work productively without teacher direction.

Most pupils show resilience and perseverance. For example, when applying their skills in mathematical development, Year 3 pupils considered the amount of energy used each day in kilowatts. They ordered the amount of energy used each day from the least to the most and used their addition skills taught in lessons to work out how much was used in total for certain days. Nearly all pupils are highly engaged with their work, show good levels of concentration and demonstrate active participation. Most older pupils reflect on their learning and use success criteria suitably to identify ways to improve their work.

Most pupils collaborate well. For example, Reception pupils effectively work in pairs when asking and answering simple questions in Welsh during their Helpwr Heddiw session. In lessons, pupils talk in pairs to revisit previous learning or to discuss what they already know. Older pupils are beginning to work together in larger "brave groups", learning to compromise and communicate effectively to solve problems.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Most pupils at Llwydcoed Primary thrive due to effective teaching across the school. Staff are knowledgeable and deliver interesting lessons in bustling classrooms. They have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour and encourage pupils to challenge themselves to be the best they can be.

Throughout the school, teachers and support staff have strong working relationships with pupils. Teachers' use of language, both in English and Welsh is effective. Most teachers use everyday Welsh confidently to support pupils' Welsh language development. They are good role models and extend pupils' vocabulary well. Nearly all staff ensure that their pupils have fun and enjoy their learning.

Most teachers use energetic introductions to lessons and teaching moves at a brisk pace. They use a variety of successful strategies that enable pupils to stay on task and complete work. They use the outdoors regularly to enhance the pupils' learning experiences such as on the 'wild trail' and outside classrooms.

Most teachers use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking and check for understanding. Many differentiate their questioning to cater for pupils' individual needs well. Teachers use a range of assessment approaches to build a picture of pupils' individual progress over time and to inform the next steps in their planning. They provide swift, verbal feedback that enables pupils to make good progress and improve their work during lessons. Many teachers make strong links to prior learning, reinforce key concepts, and meet the needs of their pupils well. In the most effective lessons, many teachers match tasks closely to pupils' abilities, offering all pupils an appropriate level of challenge. However, at times, activities are not suitably adapted for pupils who quickly demonstrate understanding or highly developed skills. As a result, more able pupils are not always challenged at the right level.

Support staff across the school are highly effective in their roles. Skilled teaching assistants support pupils effectively to make good and often very good progress in important aspects of their learning. They reflect the warm, thoughtful and supportive ethos of the school in their working relationships with pupils and provide strong support for vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs.

The school has responded innovatively to the Curriculum for Wales. The choices that leaders and staff make align with their vision to support pupils to make progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Through a whole-school thematic approach, the school is successfully developing a framework to systematically build on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum.

Leaders and staff have implemented purposeful and highly structured plans to support the teaching of literacy and numeracy, which have led to an overall rise in pupils' progress. However, the over-scaffolding of these activities constrains pupils' ability to respond creatively and to direct their own learning independently.

Across the school, teachers plan a wide range of stimulating and authentic learning experiences. Pupils contribute well to the planning of termly topics by suggesting things they want to learn during 'Dazzle Days'. As a result, these independent learning experiences enable pupils to apply their skills in engaging and challenging contexts. The school regularly reviews the curriculum, and all staff have a considerable input into curriculum development.

The provision for the youngest pupils is based on a broad range of enriching and well-coordinated learning and play experiences, which develops pupils' skills and independence effectively. Staff provide a very good range of stimulating activities indoors, and utilise extensive enhanced provision outdoors, which encourages pupils' enthusiasm and collaborative skills well. As a result, most pupils are confident and fully involved in their learning, and they make full use of the plentiful and imaginative resources.

The school develops its curriculum carefully to reflect the nature of its context, including activities that reflect the cultural, linguistic nature of a diverse Wales and the wider world. For example, pupils learn about Celtic history during their 'Time Machine' topic and other festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali, and the location of the world's tallest floating Christmas tree. The school makes good use of off-site visits, including an annual residential trip, to enhance the curriculum and



pupils' learning experiences. For example, pupils visit a local wind farm, a recycling centre, and St Fagan's Museum of National History.

### **Care, support and guidance**

Across the school, meaningful and caring relationships between staff and pupils generate trust and respect that is at the heart of the school community. The school develops empathy and compassion through active support of various national charities and a local foodbank. The school and staff successfully embody the school's core values. For example, pupils are regularly reminded of the school motto, Growing, Striving, Achieving, Believing and its accompanying actions. Leaders encourage all pupils to make links between these values and aspects of their work. For example, during assembly, the headteacher shared a story about trust and linked this to the importance of staying safe when online.

Throughout the school, there is a calm and consistent approach to behaviour management. All staff use a variety of effective strategies with pupils to resolve any issues at a very early stage. The school also uses a range of rewards for positive behaviour, although pupils are often self-motivated. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is a strength throughout the school. Teachers plan activities that encourage pupils to reflect on their emotions, to self-regulate and know how to seek help. For example, older pupils learn about the 'Circle of Control', what they can control, what they might influence and what they cannot control. As a result, they identify solutions independently and maturely, including the use of breathing exercises or meditation.

Staff offer a wide variety of clubs to support physical health and other interests. Younger pupils benefit from Athletics Tots and Music Club and older pupils take the opportunity to experience sewing, sign language and art. There is a variety of equipment available for the pupils at playtime and lunchtime, including a new climbing frame, which was purchased and installed at the request of the School Council. The physical education curriculum provides a wide range of appropriate activities that promote physical health and well-being. These include gymnastics, dance, swimming and athletics. Older pupils also participate in more adventurous activities during their annual residential visit.

The provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is well developed and highly effective. Teachers and leaders use regular assessment information to identify pupils whose progress is not in line with their abilities or stage of development. In response, staff identify and deliver specific strategies well. Interventions to support pupils' progress in literacy, numeracy and well-being are effective, closely tracked, and reviewed regularly. As a result, most of these pupils make strong progress from their starting points.

The school takes a holistic interest in its pupils and gets to know them well. Each pupil has an 'All About Me Card'. Teachers involve parents and pupils closely to produce this important information. This enables all teachers and support staff to develop their knowledge of pupils' interests and how they prefer to learn. Staff use well-being questionnaires regularly to identify pupils who may need support. Innovatively, for older pupils, staff feed information into a well-being app, which can be accessed by pupils in the classroom and at home. It enables parents and staff to gain a richer understanding of individual pupils' emotional needs and access the best

care. The school works in close partnership with agencies such as the Child and Mental Health Service, and this means that there is effective, tailored support for pupils when needed.

The school provides plentiful opportunities to develop pupils in leadership roles. The Eco Council and Criw Cymraeg contribute to integrating pupil voice into the school community. The school council, for example, organises activities such as ‘Odd Socks Day’ to celebrate what makes each one of them unique. Members plan events supporting various charities and have a small budget to upgrade playground equipment. Most groups are well established and make a meaningful difference across the school. This work deepens the relationships between staff and pupils, builds trust, responsibility and self-confidence, and develops a sense of service to their community.

The school helps pupils relate to their community through a wide range of experiences. The local vicar leads assemblies and pupils visited their local church to hold a Harvest Service. A new community wild trail has recently opened on the school site, funded by various grants, and pupils and staff are proud of this achievement. Pupils also participate in community “litter picks” and provide a clothes bank on site for community use. The school has established wider, global links via video calls with a partner school in Peru, sharing traditional songs and dances.

The school provides opportunities for pupils to visit places such as a local windfarm, the National Museum of History and a local farm park, fostering enthusiasm and a love of learning and providing pupils with rich learning experiences. Pupils have opportunities to develop creativity and self-expression through concerts and performances marking events such as Easter and St. David’s Day, also through instrumental music lessons.

The school promotes a culture of safety, empathy, care and support. There is an established system to report safeguarding concerns regarding pupils and the school makes timely referrals to outside agencies when appropriate. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding, with clear arrangements for monitoring pupils’ attendance and punctuality.

## **Leadership and management**

Since her appointment, the headteacher has worked conscientiously alongside senior leaders to provide a clear strategic direction for the development of the school, to evaluate its work and plan and deliver improvements. There is a strong team ethos among all staff, who believe that the welfare of all pupils is a vital ingredient to their success. The headteacher and leadership team deliver strong, considerate leadership and, supported by staff, have created an inclusive culture where pupils feel safe and secure and have a strong sense of trust in others.

All leaders, including governors, have a good understanding of the needs of pupils and the local community, and make every effort to meet these needs effectively. They have high expectations of each other, their staff and the pupils. Throughout the school, there is a strong sense of belonging and a strong safeguarding culture. The roles and responsibilities of leaders and staff are well defined and communicated

clearly. Overall, senior leaders have a good track record of improving pupil performance and the quality of education.

The headteacher has a clear vision for building leadership capacity across the school and the wider leadership team contributes effectively to school improvement. There is strong leadership at all levels and this has improved the school's capacity to achieve change successfully. For example, work to implement ALN reform involved robust training for all staff and thoughtful communication with parents. As a result, the school uses careful assessment processes, termly reviews and effective interventions to ensure that those receiving additional support make good progress.

Leaders and staff enjoy close working partnerships with parents. Communication between home and school is effective and leaders ensure that staff are visible at key moments during the school day. Parents trust that the school is doing the right thing for pupils and always acts in their best interests. Specialist agencies, such as the behaviour support team and health visitors, attend the school regularly to provide advice. Staff support parents sensitively, such as when helping parents to complete administrative tasks and to better understand how to support their children to read.

Communication across the school is a strength. There is clear timetable for all monitoring activities and leaders draw upon a range of first-hand information to inform their judgements. Overall, the school is developing a good track record of reviewing and developing its provision. For example, leaders identified a need to improve the writing skills of pupils across the school. Following research into effective ways to enhance the standard of writing, leaders implemented a clear strategy across the school that has improved the writing ability of all pupils significantly.

Leaders give a high priority to developing the skills of all staff and are building a culture of a learning organisation. There is an ongoing focus on improving teaching across the school. Staff have used their professional learning opportunities to undertake research to improve their own teaching and that of their colleagues. For instance, after attending a Welsh sabbatical, the leader for Welsh has successfully supported all teachers to improve their own knowledge and understanding of Welsh and this has had a positive impact on pupils' progress in speaking Welsh across the school. Through robust performance management, all staff contribute well to school improvement priorities.

Work to address national priorities is effective. There is a clear focus on refining the school's approaches to implementing the Curriculum for Wales and addressing ALN reform. The school has robust processes to track pupils' progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and most pupils have effective digital skills. Leaders are highly committed to tackling poverty in the local community. They have worked thoughtfully with external agencies, such as the Child Poverty Action Group, to audit school provision and identify and effectively address areas for improvement. As a result of changes made to school practice, the school meets the needs of the community very well.

The governing body is well informed, effective and committed to supporting the work of the school. Governors have a diverse and valuable set of skills matched to their roles and responsibilities that they use well, for example to support leaders in matters of health and safety and school finance. They contribute well to school life and to its

place within the local community. They understand the school's improvement priorities and the reasons that underpin them. They support school leaders to evaluate the work of the school well, for instance by visiting regularly to undertake learning walks and listening to pupils.

School leaders and governors manage finances effectively and make prudent decisions that benefit all pupils. The school uses its grant funding effectively to ensure targeted support for vulnerable pupils and to provide them with experiences that they might not otherwise have, such as trips to view Christmas pantomimes and local places of interest. Additional funds support provision for pupils' emotional well-being and progress in literacy skills. Governors also make appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer 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/carers 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' well-being, 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](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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