



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

A report on

Treorchy Primary School

**Glyncoli Road
Treorchy
CF42 6SA**

Date of inspection: January 2023

by

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

About Treorchy Primary School

Name of provider	Treorchy Primary School
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	429
Pupils of statutory school age	320
Number in nursery classes	49
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%)	26.8%
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%)	2.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	09/06/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	16/09/2014
Start date of inspection	23/01/2023

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

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

Overview

The school has established a strong sense of community both within and outside the school. The sense of pride the pupils have for their heritage is deep rooted. The homely and inclusive ethos supports pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning through a range of interesting experiences. The school provides the pupils with skills, develops their confidence and raises their aspirations so that they can 'believe, learn and grow' together. Pupils develop a wide range of strong mathematical, literacy and other skills as they progress through the school. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum and to respond to teachers' feedback are underdeveloped.

The pupils really enjoy coming to school. They love sharing their work and what they have achieved. They collaborate very well with each other from a young age, for example whilst having 'breakfast' together in the home corner. Nearly all pupils show a mutual respect towards all adults and towards their peers. Overall, pupils' behaviour is very good across the school.

Most pupils make good progress from their starting points. They contribute well to a variety of groups and committees and share their ideas with enthusiasm about what they would like to change or improve in their school. The school is embracing the Curriculum for Wales well, and plans a range of authentic experiences successfully. Many staff prepare their activities well, but, on occasions, there is a tendency to over direct the learning, which hinders the challenge for more able pupils and all pupils' ability to work independently. There are very strong working relationships between staff and this supports learning successfully.

The headteacher, school leaders, staff and governors have placed well-being and the care, support and guidance of all pupils at the heart of school life. The school has developed a highly successful partnership with parents through regular engagement activities, which supports the whole family. All staff develop their professional skills and knowledge together well, and this enables them to adapt provision to best meet individual pupils' needs.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teaching consistently provides opportunities to develop pupils' independent skills and challenges all pupils, particularly those who are more able
- R2 Develop the quality of feedback so pupils know how to improve their work
- R3 Ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils start school with skills and understanding below those expected for their age. However, most pupils make good progress from their different starting points, including pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), and those eligible for free school meals.

As the pupils move through the school, most make strong progress in developing their language and communication skills. After entry to the school, many pupils improve their vocabulary quickly and develop speaking skills that enable them to engage appropriately with adults and with each other. They talk knowledgeably about the subjects they are interested in, such as their favourite nursery rhyme. By Year 6, many older pupils have a good understanding of how to get their point across when discussing the use of language in books. Most pupils listen well across the school.

Most pupils enjoy learning Welsh and greet everyone enthusiastically with either the time of day or with a 'Shwmai'. They respond well to teachers' instructions and demonstrate a good understanding of basic commands. A few respond confidently in Welsh when asked simple questions but, overall, most pupils do not make the progress in developing their Welsh language skills of which they are capable.

As pupils move through the school, their reading skills develop effectively. It is very evident how much they enjoy books and how they develop an interest in the written word. Most nursery and reception pupils listen well to stories and re-tell them to friends and adults. They begin to recognise and name a range of sounds and use this knowledge to begin to read simple words. By Year 2, many pupils read with fluency. They develop their skills effectively to gather simple information, for example about their family. As pupils move through the school, they build on this progress and develop a good range of techniques to become fluent readers. By Year 6, many pupils read a range of suitable texts and apply their reading skills effectively to support their learning, for example when gathering facts about the mythical creatures of Wales.

Most pupils' writing skills develop soundly. From a very early age, they practise drawing patterns correctly, which leads naturally to forming letters well. By Year 3, most begin to write creatively and show a sound awareness of how to write poetry, for example about life in the trenches during World War One. Many pupils in Years 5 and 6 write to a good standard. They create extended factual and imaginative pieces, such as a detailed report on the life of Queen Elizabeth II. On the whole, they spell and punctuate with a good level of accuracy. However, at times, the over-reliance on work sheets and scaffolding restricts pupils' ability to write creatively, particularly the more able.

Through structured maths lessons, most pupils gain a good understanding of a range of skills. They use these confidently when completing their tasks and, when given an opportunity, they begin to use them more flexibly in a range of meaningful activities. In reception, pupils count correctly and use natural resources, such as pieces of wood and pebbles, to make a repeating pattern. They enjoy fishing for 'numbers' and

accurately form the number to correspond with what they have caught. Pupils from Year 2 work together to solve problems. For example, they group different objects together when predicting which ones will sink and which ones will float. They learn various concepts, such as addition and subtraction, and the mathematical link between them. Most pupils across the school have a sound understanding of place value and measure accurately in different contexts. By Year 6, they build well on their previous understanding and apply this knowledge to the next step in their learning. Although nearly all pupils use their mathematical skills confidently in discrete maths lessons, they do not apply their numeracy skills often enough in other areas of the curriculum.

Pupils' digital skills across the school are suitable. From nursery to Year 2, pupils have the skills to instruct a programmable toy to move in a variety of directions. They use a variety of apps and programs to support their learning in language and maths. As the pupils move through the school, they develop their use of simple coding programs, multimedia tools and word processing packages to an appropriate standard to present and produce work across the curriculum.

Many pupils develop creative and musical skills well during well-focused dance and music lessons. Across the school, pupils confidently use a variety of mediums in art lessons. For instance, they use chalk to create a beach scene and sketch portraits of their families to celebrate how everyone differs. Younger pupils develop their fine and gross motor skills appropriately through a variety of activities. Pupils across the school develop their physical skills very well in lessons, during playtimes, after-school clubs and whole-school activities.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are very happy to attend school. The strong relationship between staff and pupils enables them to learn and develop as well-rounded individuals. They show pride in their school and feel safe within its inclusive and caring ethos. The pupils value the fact that adults in the school listen to their views and take them into account when considering decisions that affect them.

Pupils are courteous and welcoming to adults and visitors and, overall, behaviour is very good. Nearly all pupils collaborate well and show respect for the contributions of other pupils. They play together happily, take turns and support each other effectively while playing games and socialising during break time. When discussing in group situations, they listen carefully to one another and will allow each one to finish speaking before sharing their personal opinions.

Nearly all pupils develop well as capable learners. They have positive attitudes to learning, show strong interest in their work and talk confidently and enthusiastically about school life. Many pupils listen attentively to teachers' instructions and concentrate well on their work during lessons. From an early age, pupils show resilience in their work, particularly when faced with a challenge, when, for example, pupils in Year 2 design, experiment and create a trap to capture the witch from a famous fairy tale. Most pupils make suitable choices about what they want to learn as part of their termly themes. However, pupils' ability to work independently and make choices of how they want to learn is less effective as there is a tendency by staff to over-direct the learning.

Pupils are developing very well as ethical, informed citizens. They are fair and considerate when dealing with one another and demonstrate a good knowledge of children's rights. For example, older pupils discuss maturely the issue of child labour in the coal mines of the Rhondda and compare this with the exploitation of children today. In addition, the pupils raise money for a well-known children's cancer charity and help out in the local charity shops. As a result, nearly all pupils show a strong understanding of the importance of their contributions towards creating a caring society.

Nearly all pupils show enthusiasm for taking on additional responsibilities such as becoming part of the pupil voice groups. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and representatives are proud of their valuable contributions and achievements. This includes leading whole-school assemblies on matters that are important to them, such as recycling. Pupils' understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily is developing well. A good example is how pupils use the vegetables they have grown themselves to sell to the community in the school shop and produce cooking video blogs to share simple and healthy recipes made with these ingredients. Most pupils understand the benefit of physical exercise on their health, such as taking part in swimming lessons and participating in daily physical tasks. In addition, the school's annual local three peaks challenge benefits the pupils' fitness greatly and contributes towards broadening their knowledge about their local environment successfully.

Nearly all pupils have a strong understanding of the need to be careful when using the internet. They remind each other sensibly that they should not share passwords. Through their work with the local police liaison officer, they know how to react if faced with issues such as cyber-bullying or anti-social behaviour. This impacts positively on their well-being and general life skills.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, teachers and support staff work very well together to create a stimulating learning environment. All staff have strong and positive working relationships with pupils, and they support them successfully, using a range of effective methods, to manage their behaviour. The school is developing a sound understanding of the Curriculum for Wales and the staff have established a successful community-led curriculum through a shared vision for its implementation. It is broad and balanced and takes into account the needs and context of its pupils. The school incorporates its locality very well into its curriculum and utilises many different aspects, such as local businesses and the features of the landscape, with purpose.

Nearly all teachers use resources and the physical environment well to further enhance curriculum provision for games, physical education and the development of pupils' co-ordination skills. The school offers a range of visits, residential opportunities and engaging extra-curricular activities that enrich pupils' experiences, such as after-school clubs to develop their literacy and creative skills.

Teachers from the same year groups work well together to ensure that learning activities are coherent and purposeful. They plan for a range of interesting tasks and activities that encourage pupils to apply and reinforce their knowledge and skills.

Staff ensure that pupils contribute to their curriculum well and link their group enquiry-based work to their projects. Most teachers spark their pupils' imagination and engage them successfully with their topic with the use of, for example, an email from the Fairy Tale Police Department (FTPD) regarding a 'Who did it?' scenario.

At the beginning of class activities, teachers provide clear explanations to pupils to ensure that they are fully aware of what to do to succeed. They use a good range of questioning techniques to confirm pupils' current understanding, prompt ideas and encourage thinking. In the best examples, teachers use pupil responses well to adapt the course of the learning during the activity. However, there is a tendency for teachers to over-direct too many activities, which limits opportunities for pupils to become independent learners and hinders the level of challenge for those pupils who are more able.

The provision for developing pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills is strong. Through well-planned activities and by providing beneficial literacy areas within classrooms, pupils build the confidence and resilience to stand up and perform and develop an enjoyment of books, for example in the 'cosy' reading corners. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills creatively, such as using a green screen to showcase the history of the local theatre. However, the provision for pupils to use their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum is inconsistent and this limits the progress that pupils make in developing and using these skills.

Staff know the pupils well and, overall, teachers provide valuable oral feedback to support pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work. However, across the school, teachers' written feedback is inconsistent and does not always provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to improve their work. On the whole, teachers use progress-tracking arrangements very well when planning the next steps in pupils' learning.

Across the school, staff demonstrate a sense of pride in the Welsh language. In those cases, where staff have a sound knowledge and confidence in the use of Welsh, it is used well to support the development of pupils' skills. However, overall, the use of Welsh in formal teaching activities is inconsistent.

The curriculum includes strong opportunities for pupils to learn and celebrate diversity in society, making close links with pupils' community and Wales as a whole. For example, pupils research and produce portraits on sports, film and wider personalities such as Paul Robeson. Studying the work of Betty Campbell in Year 6 and her role in developing diversity and inclusivity has a positive effect on pupils' values and attitudes to each other. Planning for the curriculum supports pupils' personal and social development well and, as a result, they think critically about current situations in the news and those people negatively affected by social issues.

Care, support and guidance

The school knows its pupils, their backgrounds and the local community very well. All staff place a high priority on the well-being of all pupils and this focus is a key aspect of the school's provision. The staff have worked closely with pupils to develop self-control strategies in order to control their own emotions and, as a consequence,

pupils' behaviour is very good overall. The strong culture of safeguarding and the inclusive, caring ethos towards all pupils are a notable feature of the school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

The importance of the community underpins the work of the school. Consequently, pupils are proud of their Welsh heritage and culture and identify closely with their town and its surrounding area. From a young age, pupils develop as active citizens and make valuable contributions to the locality, such as instigating a phone box library and organising a community litter pick. These experiences help the pupils to respect and care for their own area well. In addition, the school makes good use of visitors to enrich pupils' experiences. For example, regular visits from a local artist inspire pupils to produce pieces of art of high quality and to develop different artistic and other skills.

The school's support for pupils with ALN is strong. Pupil progress is tracked effectively to identify and plan provision for individuals and groups of pupils. The school plans literacy and numeracy activities effectively to support the learning of pupils with ALN and, as a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points. The ALN co-ordinator works very well with pupils and parents to devise a useful "all about me" profile, which strengthens the school's understanding of each pupil. Staff support well-being effectively and the tailored social and emotional literacy programmes are well established and have a notable impact. Staff work closely with parents and welfare agencies to promote the importance of good attendance and to address any persistent absences thoroughly.

The school ensures a fair representation of pupils across the range of pupil voice groups, which adds to the sense of fairness and equality within the school. These roles support the development of their self-confidence and help pupils influence the work of the school. Staff ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted positively through a range of activities. For example, all classes have a variety of books that celebrate different types of families. These are readily available in reading corners and the ethos of 'different families, same love' infiltrates through the school.

The school plans a range of activities for pupils to explore their rights as children. Teachers skilfully include pupils' own questions and ideas into class discussions, such as exploring widely publicised controversial ideas by certain social media influencers. As a result, pupils confidently distinguish between right and wrong, reflect on fundamental questions and on their own beliefs or values. In addition, the school provides pupils with comprehensive opportunities to develop their moral, ethical and spiritual understanding through the curriculum and daily acts of worship.

Through regular music and dance lessons, pupils cultivate their expressive art skills well. As they develop their self-confidence, the pupils compete in the local and national Eisteddfod in art, reciting, singing and dance competitions. In addition, the school also provides a wide range of extra-curricular sporting opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the importance of a healthy body and activities to teach the pupils about eating healthily.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides strong, effective leadership and sets an extremely positive ethos for all aspects of the school's work. The school has a clear vision for the education and well-being of all learners and implements this successfully. There is a well-established team ethic across the school, and leaders, staff and governors have a thorough understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local area. They work passionately and with commitment. As a result, the school is a stimulating and vibrant learning community with an inclusive culture that ensures that all pupils feel a secure sense of belonging.

Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and play an important part in the school improvement process. Leaders have developed robust procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the school's work, including learning walks, scrutiny of pupils' books and analysing pupil progress data. These processes help leaders to have a broad understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, the focus to improve pupils' engagement in reading has impacted positively on improving standards in a short time. There is a shared responsibility for delivering national and school priorities amongst all staff. This is reflected well in the way the school has developed its curriculum design to reflect the Curriculum for Wales and reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment. The school's approach to the ALN reform is successful. However, the focus on improving the standard of pupils' Welsh speaking skills is less effective.

The performance management system for staff is robust and all staff engage with professional learning opportunities to improve their skills and effectiveness in supporting pupils. Teachers benefit from working in pairs and small teams with colleagues in school and across the local cluster to develop their professional practice. Overall, this impacts well on improvements to provision and pupil outcomes.

The school's partnership work with parents and support agencies is very effective. Its engagement with parents is fully integrated in the life of the school. For example, during the regular coffee morning sessions, staff provide training to help parents support their child's well-being and give them opportunities to share their ideas and suggestions on how to improve the school. In addition, the school provides parents with a weekly drop-in session to seek advice for those who find themselves in challenging circumstances. Parents trust that the school is doing the right thing for their children and that staff will always act in their best interests and work with them sensitively.

The governing body is well informed, effective and committed to supporting the school. All governors actively participate in monitoring the school improvement plan and play a key part in setting the strategic direction for the school. Regular meetings to discuss finance and curriculum development, as well as frequent visits to school, enable governors to strengthen their understanding of the standards achieved and the quality of the provision. They challenge sensibly as critical friends and effectively hold the school to account for its performance. Governors keep suitable oversight of healthy eating and drinking and have a secure understanding of their role in safeguarding.

Governors monitor the expenditure and the impact of the school's resources prudently. They respond purposefully to financial challenges and plan sensibly to mitigate any possible future risks. For example, governors, in conjunction with the headteacher, run a highly successful community shop, which families use on a pay what you can basis. They ensure that the school uses the pupil development grant effectively to improve the skills and emotional development of vulnerable pupils and to provide them with experiences that they might not otherwise have.

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)

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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