



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

A report on

**Hirwaun Primary School
Glannant Street
Hirwaun
Aberdare
RCT
CF44 9NF**

Date of inspection: February 2018

by

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

About Hirwaun Primary School

Hirwaun Primary School is in Rhondda Cynon Taff. There are 250 pupils on roll aged 3 to 11 years. Pupils are organised into nine classes, five of which are mixed age.

Around 37% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is well above the national average of 19%. The school identifies around 25% of pupils with additional learning needs, including four pupils with a statement of special educational needs. This is slightly above the national average of 21%. There are a very few pupils looked after by the local authority. Nearly all pupils are of white British origin. A few pupils have English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school's last inspection was in September 2011. The headteacher took up her position in October 2009.

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

Staff at Hirwaun Primary School place a strong emphasis on ensuring pupils' wellbeing and that they provide them with a safe, inviting and secure place to learn. However, they do not have high enough expectations in terms of the academic standards that pupils should achieve. As a result, a minority of pupils do not make good enough progress as they move through the school, particularly in key stage 2. Across the school, pupils do not have enough chances to develop as independent, capable and ambitious leaders. Leaders do not hold staff to account well enough and do not always identify and address important areas that the school needs to improve.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and learning experiences	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the quality of teaching and feedback to pupils
- R2 Improve standards of pupils' reading, writing and presentation of work
- R3 Improve pupils' standards in information and communication technology (ICT)
- R4 Ensure that the curriculum meets requirements and develops pupils' skills progressively
- R5 Improve pupils' independent learning skills
- R6 Correctly identify and address important areas of teaching and learning that need to improve and hold all members of staff to account robustly

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils enter the school with skills below that expected for their age. As they move through the foundation phase, the majority make sound progress in improving their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Many pupils with additional learning needs make strong progress from their starting points, particularly in improving their reading skills. However, by the end of key stage 2, a minority of pupils do not improve their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills well enough.

In the foundation phase, most pupils develop their oracy skills well. Many are eager to explain what they are doing in class. For example, in the nursery, pupils respond well to questions about their work on the Chinese New Year. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils listen appropriately when others are talking and engage well in conversation with adults and each other in English and Welsh. In Year 6, many pupils use a range of known sentence patterns and appropriate vocabulary to talk about themselves and their hobbies in Welsh.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop an appropriate awareness of phonics. They use this knowledge successfully to help them decode unfamiliar words. As they move through the foundation phase, the majority improve their fluency and confidence in reading simple texts. However, their understanding of what they read varies too widely. In key stage 2, many pupils have positive attitudes towards reading and enjoy discussing their favourite authors. By Year 6, the majority of pupils read with suitable fluency and expression. However, apart from a few that are more able, their understanding of different texts and use of skills such as skimming and scanning are underdeveloped. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils read simple and familiar Welsh texts with some accurate pronunciation and understanding.

As they move through the school, many pupils do not develop their writing skills well enough in English or in Welsh. By the end of the foundation phase, pupils that are more able begin to use a range of suitable vocabulary in their work, for example to describe Batman as wearing 'a black mask because of his secret identity'. By Year 2, the majority begin to use capital letters and full stops correctly. However, most pupils do not use their knowledge of phonics well enough to spell common words accurately. In key stage 2, pupils write for a suitable range of different audiences. For example, in Years 3 and 4, they write interesting fact files on insects and, in Years 5 and 6, detailed autobiographies. However, many pupils do not spell words correctly and do not use basic punctuation consistently well to demarcate their work. Very few use a wide range of punctuation or mature vocabulary to engage the reader effectively. Pupils write in Welsh on a regular basis using an appropriate range of vocabulary and sentence patterns. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 write short letters about themselves. However, many pupils they do not always understand what they have written. Most pupils do not take enough care with their handwriting and present their work very poorly.

Pupils use their literacy skills regularly in other subjects. However, in the majority of classes, pupils do not use their writing skills at a high enough level as teachers provide them with too much scaffolding.

In the foundation phase, most pupils begin to develop a sound grasp of number. By Year 2, the majority work with numbers up to 100 with confidence and use their numeracy skills well to help them solve simple problems. By the end of key stage 2, pupils that are more able use their number skills confidently to help them plan real life events such as designing a new tourist attraction within a given budget. However, the majority do not have quick recall of number facts and do not always choose correct methods to solve problems. Across the school, pupils do not use their numeracy skills well enough and in meaningful contexts in other subjects.

In the foundation phase, pupils develop their ICT skills appropriately. In reception, they begin to programme toys to move in a given direction. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 create simple databases to support their science work on habitats and make presentations on topics of their choice, for example their favourite football teams. However, across the school most pupils do not have secure ICT skills and do not use them often enough to support their learning.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. For example, they use good manners when speaking to visitors and politely hold doors open for them. They have a secure understanding of whom to speak to in school if they are upset or worried. Most have a strong knowledge of how to stay safe, including when online. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have created posters to raise awareness about e-safety.

Throughout the school, most pupils have a suitable understanding of how they should keep healthy and take regular exercise. Older pupils discuss what foods are healthy for them and recognise the need to make healthy choices to enable them to have a balanced diet. Most pupils keep fit by taking part in physical education lessons and by playing games in the playground. However, due to the school's limited provision, only a minority take part in extra-curricular sports' clubs.

Pupils, including those with additional learning needs, take on a range of responsibilities within the school community. For example, pupils belong to several pupil voice groups, such as the school council and eco committee. Pupils take these roles seriously and enjoy their work. However, only a few pupils organise meetings and lead activities independently.

Pupils take part in valuable fundraising activities to raise money for a range of charities. For example, last year, many pupils ran in a local running race to raise money for a cancer charity. In addition, pupils collect food at harvest time to donate to a local food bank. Through these events, pupils develop a sound awareness of people that are less fortunate than they are.

Most pupils have a positive attitude towards school and many engage readily in classroom tasks with enthusiasm. Many work sensibly with a partner and in groups. They demonstrate thoughtfulness when listening to others and show respect for the

opinions of different people. However, across the school many pupils do not sustain their concentration well enough to enable them to complete tasks to a high enough standard. Many pupils do not have the necessary skills to enable them to work independently and rarely make choices about what and how they would like to learn. In addition, the majority of pupils do not display appropriate resilience when faced with a problem and do not use a wide range of strategies when they find their work challenging.

Teaching and learning experiences: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

The school provides pupils with an appropriate topic based curriculum. However, teachers' planning does not ensure that they teach skills progressively or cover all curriculum requirements. Adults lead most activities and do not give pupils appropriate opportunities to develop as independent, capable and ambitious learners. Teachers use visits well to enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 visit Cardiff Castle and, in Years 5 and 6, visit Llancaiach Fawr when studying history. The school has recently introduced new initiatives to improve pupils' reading comprehension and numeracy reasoning skills. However, these initiatives are at an early stage of development and have not yet improved pupils' skills in these areas.

The majority of teachers plan regular activities for pupils to use their literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, in Year 1, they list animals that you can find in different habitats and, in Years 3 and 4, write informative pirate wanted posters. However, many teachers provide pupils with unnecessary scaffolding. As a result, pupils do not use their literacy skills independently or well enough at a suitable level.

Most teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient meaningful opportunities to use their numeracy skills appropriately in other subjects, and the school's provision for developing pupils' ICT skills is weak. There is no planned programme to teach these skills progressively and pupils have limited chances to use them to support their learning in other subjects.

The school does not implement foundation phase principles well enough. Most teachers do not provide pupils with frequent opportunities to work independently or to choose how and what they learn. In addition, they do not regularly plan activities in the school's expansive outside areas.

Teachers use a locally agreed scheme to plan a comprehensive programme of work that develops pupils' Welsh language skills progressively. However, teachers do not use the plans appropriately to ensure that pupils improve their Welsh writing skills well enough. The school environment promotes the Welsh language and culture successfully. Many teachers include elements of Welsh heritage and culture within their topic work. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 study Welsh castles and a local artist.

Most teachers have positive relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. Nearly all teachers have developed their classrooms as bright and inviting learning environments. In the majority of classes, teachers plan stimulating activities that engage the majority of pupils successfully. However, most teachers do not have

high enough expectations in terms of the standards that pupils should achieve and do not challenge them to produce their best work. They do not always plan activities that meet the needs of all learners well enough. In addition, in most classes, teachers do not regularly provide pupils with opportunities to work independently.

Although the majority of teachers provide pupils with positive feedback on what they have done well, few give pupils effective guidance on how they can improve their work. In addition, they do not consistently correct pupils' mistakes, including spelling and punctuation errors. As a result, feedback does not help pupils to improve the standard of their work and many pupils often repeat mistakes. Overall, standard of teaching is unsatisfactory.

Teachers assess pupils' progress on a regular basis and use an appropriate electronic system to record these assessments. However, most teachers' judgements on pupils' achievement are not an accurate reflection of the work that they produce. A minority of end of phase teacher assessments are too generous.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There are appropriate systems to track and monitor the progress of all pupils as they move through the school. Teachers use data successfully to identify pupils who need additional support in literacy and with emotional wellbeing and ensure that they receive appropriate help.

The school works closely with a number of outside agencies to provide effective support for pupils with additional needs. For example, as a result of working with behavioural support staff, many pupils with emotional needs are now more engaged in their learning. Teachers and support staff provide targeted pupils with suitable individual education plans and monitor the progress that they make towards meeting their individual targets regularly. The school's additional learning needs co-ordinator meets regularly with parents to discuss these plans and to provide them with useful strategies to support their children at home.

The school has strong lines of communication with parents and carers. Parents find the teachers approachable and speak with them regularly about their child's wellbeing and progress and about how they can help them at home. For example, the school recently organised a beneficial 'Learning Together' workshop for a group of parents to improve their basic skills so that they can help their child with homework more confidently.

Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about substance misuse, sex and relationships and online safety through the school's personal and social education scheme. The community nurse and local police liaison officer support this work well by delivering important messages to pupils. For example, they teach lessons on healthy lifestyles and keeping safe, including when using the internet. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school is an inclusive community where there are opportunities for pupils to play an active role in its daily life and work. The school's pupil voice groups help to

develop pupils' citizenships skills successfully. For example, the eco committee recycle unwanted clothing, bedding and shoes from the school's local community. However, opportunities for pupils to make a worthwhile contribution to curriculum planning are at an early stage of development and only a few lead activities independently.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for older pupils to understand how to organise a profit-making event. For example, pupils in Year 6 help to organise the annual book fair. Pupils apply for specific roles and are interviewed and appointed to them. This successful initiative provides pupils with the opportunity to handle money and keep financial records.

Teachers provide pupils with valuable lessons and activities to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has an appropriate personal and social education programme that teaches pupils about the core values of tolerance, respect and the importance of equality and diversity. Collective worship provides pupils with worthwhile opportunities to reflect on their actions and how they affect others. Teachers use whole school events to develop pupils' understanding of the consequences of bullying and to promote and celebrate good behaviour. In addition, pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 have benefited from workshops the school has provided on dealing with discrimination in all its forms. The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

There are useful opportunities to promote pupils' cultural development. For example, the school has been involved in a national festival to celebrate the work of Shakespeare and pupils have worked with a resident local artist.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school based on providing pupils with a supportive and stimulating learning environment where they feel safe and secure and are eager to learn. She shares this vision effectively with staff, pupils and parents. Senior leaders work hard to minimise the effects of deprivation on pupils. However, they do not always have high enough expectations of staff or pupils and do not challenge underperformance robustly.

There is an appropriate staffing structure and senior managers understand their roles and responsibilities in delivering improvements to important areas of teaching and learning. Many of the senior management team are new to their roles. They have begun to lead initiatives, such as introducing strategies to improve pupils' mathematical reasoning skills, developing pupils' oracy skills in the foundation phase, particularly those of boys, and enhancing the school's provision for teaching Welsh. However, it is too early to judge if these initiatives have brought about sustainable improvements.

Governors are supportive of the school. They visit the school regularly, take part in learning walks to look at areas of development that link to the school's improvement plan and provide useful written feedback to staff. They offer the school suitable challenge about aspects of its work, but they do not always have a secure understanding of pupils' expected standards. This means that they are not always able to make robust challenges about the standards that pupils achieve.

The school has suitable procedures to manage the performance of staff. Leaders identify suitable targets to develop whole school priorities and the individual needs of staff. They provide appropriate training that links to individual targets and whole school priorities. However, they do not always hold staff to account well enough for the performance of pupils or for the consistent, high quality application of agreed school initiatives.

There are suitable procedures to evaluate the school's performance and to plan for improvement. These have helped staff and governors to identify important areas for development, such as improving pupils' numeracy skills, and developing the outdoor area in the foundation phase. However, the application of these procedures is not always effective in correctly identifying and addressing important areas of teaching and learning that need to improve.

The school has a record of bringing about improvements in a few areas, such as providing greater support for pupils' emotional needs. As a result, the behaviour and confidence of vulnerable pupils have improved. Leaders make appropriate use of the pupil development grant to provide additional support for identified pupils. For example, they provide opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in art and drama and deliver support programmes to pupils who require additional help with their work.

Senior leaders and governors manage the school's resources suitably. Overall, there are enough teachers and support staff to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils generally have enough equipment to support their learning effectively in most areas, but there is not enough suitable equipment to deliver the curriculum for ICT. The school building provides an attractive environment for pupils to learn. However, the school does not offer a suitable or stimulating outdoor environment for pupils, particularly in the foundation phase.

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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