



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

A report on

**Pontygwaith Primary School
Graig Street
Pontygwaith
Ferndale
RCT
CF43 3LY**

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by

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

About Pontygwaith Primary School

Pontygwaith Community Primary School is situated in the village of Pontygwaith, near Porth in the Rhondda valley, in Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. Currently, there are 185 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11 years of age, including 24 nursery pupils, 15 of whom attend on a part-time basis.

Around 29% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average of 19%. The school identifies around 34% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is also above the national average of 21%.

Nearly all the pupils are from a white British background where English is the predominant language. Very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school was last inspected in March 2011. The headteacher was appointed in September 2016.

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

By the end of key stage 2, most pupils make good progress in their learning from their starting points. Most have very positive attitudes to learning and show great pride in their school and their work.

The school provides interesting learning experiences that engage most pupils well. There is effective planning to develop pupils' skills as they progress through the school. Although there are strong areas of teaching in the school, overall the quality of teaching and feedback to pupils varies.

The school is an inclusive community where staff and pupils show a high level of care and respect for each other. Arrangements for supporting pupils with additional learning needs are effective and enable targeted pupils to make good progress.

The headteacher leads the school well and receives strong support from the deputy headteacher, senior leaders and a knowledgeable governing body. They are committed to tackling disadvantage and to reducing barriers to pupils' learning.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teaching in all classes consistently challenges pupils of all abilities, especially the more able
- R2 Refine teachers' feedback so that it enables pupils to understand clearly what they need to do to improve their work
- R3 Raise standards in Welsh second language at key stage 2

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Many pupils begin school with skills that are below the level expected for their age. Most make good progress as they move through the school and achieve well by the end of key stage 2. Pupils with additional needs make good progress from their starting points. However, more able pupils do not always achieve well enough.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make strong progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Pupils in the nursery and reception classes respond well to instructions and questions by adults. In Year 2, most pupils share their ideas enthusiastically and enjoy discussing their work. When reading, most pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds to work out new words well. They read clearly and with fluency. Most pupils develop effective writing skills across the foundation phase. In Year 2, most write well in a suitable range of genres and use punctuation appropriately, for example when producing interesting newspaper articles on storm Emma.

In key stage 2, most pupils speak with increasing confidence. They respect each other's viewpoints and opinions and contribute well to group discussions. A notable example of this is the sophisticated manner in which pupils in Years 5 and 6 discuss plans for their world cup football competition. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils have positive attitudes to reading and discuss their books well. In Year 6, they use their reading skills effectively when searching for information about various topics, for example the impact of the blitz on Swansea. Most pupils develop their writing skills successfully in a range of genres and contexts and use punctuation and paragraphs effectively to structure their work. For example, they produce stimulating pieces of work on Greek legends and explain their choices successfully to adults. Many pupils use their literacy skills confidently in other subjects across the curriculum.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in developing their basic communication skills in Welsh. They use familiar vocabulary to respond to questions and begin basic conversations. However, most pupils in key stage 2 lack the ability to extend their conversational skills and their vocabulary is often limited to simple phrases and words. In key stage 2, pupils do not use their Welsh oracy skills often enough outside of Welsh lessons.

As pupils move through the foundation phase, most develop their mathematical skills well and make good progress. They apply these skills meaningfully in practical situations. For example, they add money while pretending to shop and create symmetrical patterns for Celtic jewellery. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils have good knowledge, skills and understanding that are appropriate for their age. They create a tally chart to record favourite fruit in the class and use this information to create a block graph. Most understand number well and use this knowledge effectively to read the daily temperature on a thermometer scale and find volume by counting cubes.

Most pupils continue to make good progress in mathematics as they move through key stage 2. By Year 4, they find the perimeter of composite shapes, convert

between analogue and digital time, use co-ordinates in the first quadrant, calculate fractions of quantities and investigate patterns in the routes of a journey. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils are confident and competent mathematicians. They add and subtract decimals to two-decimal places, investigate combinations of different flavoured scoops in an ice-cream cone, find the mean and range of a set of data and measure angles to the nearest degree. Throughout the school, most pupils use their numeracy skills well in subjects other than mathematics. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 calculate the weekly food ration for an individual living during World War 2.

Throughout the school most pupils develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively. In the foundation phase, many pupils collect data and present it in a variety of ways, such as in graphs. Pupils use quick response codes successfully to record information in their books and in various parts of the school. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils improve their knowledge of a wide range of ICT applications exceptionally well. For example, they regularly work collaboratively online using an extensive range of skills. Most pupils know how to stay safe online.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and there are strong working relationships between them and staff. Pupils are very polite towards staff and each other and nearly all are kind and caring. This is especially notable at playtimes when the school buddies support pupils on the playground and use a buddy bench and an area where pupils can reflect responsibly. Most pupils take great pride in their school and they are eager to share their views and successes with visitors.

Most pupils behave well, have a good understanding of class routines and move around the school calmly. Most work diligently in lessons and they generally settle quickly and work purposefully. Most pupils engage effectively with learning experiences and persevere well with new learning tasks. For example, pupils in Year 2 demonstrate great enthusiasm as they research the moon and during their activity about a tiger that came to tea. Years 5 and 6 pupils successfully engage in real-life learning experiences during their thematic work on chemistry when they learn how to make soap. Most pupils display respect for the contributions of others and collaborate well in lessons.

Many pupils throughout the school take on roles of responsibility enthusiastically and play an active part in the school. They speak readily about the range of leadership roles available to them where they can communicate their views forums. These roles enable pupils to develop a mature understanding of their communal responsibilities and become ethical and responsible citizens.

Most pupils understand the importance of keeping themselves fit and healthy. Many pupils take part enthusiastically in physical education as part of their curriculum and in the range of extra-curricular activities on offer, such as football and netball. Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school. Most pupils understand the importance of using the internet safely. Nearly all know whom to turn to if they have a concern and they have confidence that staff will address any issues that arise swiftly and efficiently.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement. Most staff have positive working relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. In the foundation phase, teachers have a good understanding of how young children learn and they create a stimulating learning environment. This ensures the delivery of good quality teaching strategies throughout the foundation phase. There is a good balance of tasks directed by the teacher and child-led learning activities. Teachers make effective use of the outdoor areas to encourage imaginative and creative play.

The majority of teachers plan interesting learning activities that engage pupils successfully and use probing questioning techniques well to deepen pupils' understanding. For example, in Years 5 and 6 the teaching uses a range of stimulating questions to promote pupils' thinking skills effectively as they discuss Gulliver's travels. In most lessons, support staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and lead small group activities successfully. However, there is variation in the quality and impact of teaching. In a minority of instances, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and they do not establish an appropriate pace of learning. Consequently, pupils occasionally spend too much time on undemanding tasks and they have insufficient opportunities to consolidate their learning.

The majority of teachers give helpful verbal feedback to pupils during lessons. However, overall staff do not consistently show pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers generally set individual targets for pupils, but they do not regularly involve pupils in assessing their own work and that of other pupils.

Communication, numeracy and ICT skills are given a clear focus in teachers' plans and this has a positive influence on standards. Teachers plan effectively to ensure that the requirements of the literacy and numeracy framework are integrated fully in schemes of work. This is reflected clearly in pupils' ability to develop their skills systematically as they move through the school. Purposeful thematic activities provide pupils with stimulating experiences that engage their interest well. For example, topics such as 'What A Wonderful World' and the 'Blitz' successfully promote the development of older pupils' investigative and independent skills and ensure a good balance of experiences in the humanities and sciences.

The school provides wider experiences for pupils to enhance their learning effectively. For example, they visit Cardiff Castle, and older pupils undertake residential visits to adventure centres. The extra-curricular clubs on offer, for example sporting, dancing and a wide range of Urdd activities, have a positive impact on pupils' personal and social development.

The majority of staff model the Welsh language appropriately. However, in general, teachers do not ensure that pupils use the language naturally within the school day and they do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills outside of Welsh lessons. Teachers ensure that the Welsh heritage is given suitable prominence through the annual school Eisteddfod and residential visits to the Urdd centre at Llangrannog.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school uses an effective tracking system to monitor the progress of pupils. Staff use this information purposefully to identify those pupils in need of additional support. For example, the school provides many beneficial intervention programmes to support pupils who need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and to help those with emotional needs. All pupils with additional learning needs have worthwhile, child-friendly individual education plans which include achievable targets and identify clearly the next steps in learning. Pupils and parents make a positive contribution to these processes and this ensures that they understand the targets fully. Teaching assistants provide valuable support to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills successfully.

A range of effective methods of communication ensures strong relationships with parents. For example, the school website, various social media and ICT applications provide helpful information about school events and pupils' achievements. The school offers a beneficial range of opportunities for parents to engage with the school and to learn how to support their children's learning. For example, the school has established purposeful workshops to help parents to promote their children's reading skills. In addition, regular formal and informal consultations provide many opportunities for parents to learn how to support their children's wellbeing and learning.

The school has effective arrangements to support pupils' wellbeing. Staff have established a caring community that successfully nurtures pupils' personal and social skills well. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and respond to their individual needs and interests sensitively. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and, as a result, most pupils demonstrate good behaviour in and around the school.

The school has robust arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Regular physical education lessons and a wide range of extra-curricular events promote pupils' fitness successfully. For example, the school organises regular sporting events in the area, which have a positive impact on pupils' self esteem and personal development.

The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' moral, social, cultural and spiritual education. Assemblies provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to reflect on how they can become mature and ethical citizens. In addition, the school offers many opportunities for pupils to develop their creative abilities. For example, pupils' stimulating artwork is featured around the school and there are opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of Urdd activities, such as singing and dancing.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff are highly effective role models who lead by example and create a strong vision and purpose for the whole school community. They distribute leadership very effectively so that all staff have a

part to play in school improvement. Staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and they work together well to ensure a supportive and caring environment that promotes pupils' progress and wellbeing successfully. For example, leaders in the foundation phase are very skilful in creating a stimulating learning environment and an engaging curriculum that enables pupils to make good progress. The governors play an important role in the school. They are highly committed to the school community and challenge the school robustly. They monitor the finances of the school particularly well. For example, they ensure that grants, including the pupil development grant, are used purposefully to enhance pupils' learning. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well.

Leaders have a good track record of improving the school's provision which, in turn, has enhanced the performance of pupils. For example, the introduction of new approaches to the teaching of numeracy enables pupils to progress well in their understanding and use of number. Leaders have also managed change skilfully. For example, they have successfully integrated a large number of pupils who arrived recently from a local school that closed and created a vibrant school community.

The school has a strong culture and ethos to support the professional learning of all staff. Staff receive purposeful support and training from colleagues as well as from senior leaders. Teaching assistants receive worthwhile training that makes them more effective in their roles. For example, training for the delivery of a social and emotional programme for vulnerable pupils is proving to be very effective. Leaders use performance management procedures well to drive improvement and they link targets to whole-school improvement plans effectively.

The school evaluates its performance meticulously using a wide range of successful strategies, including lesson observations, book scrutinies and by talking to pupils. As a result, leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. For example, areas for improvement in teaching have been swiftly identified and actions introduced to address the issues. However, leaders' perceptive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is not always communicated clearly in the report to governors or in the school's self-evaluation report.

Leaders produce a comprehensive school improvement plan that indicates clearly the expected outcomes, actions to be taken, staff responsibilities and the required funding. All the priorities in the plan arise from the school's self-evaluation report. The plan ensures important improvements in pupils' performance. For example, it has resulted in pupils making good progress in their oracy skills.

The school works effectively in partnership with other local schools to improve the provision for pupils. The secondary school cluster groups work well together to ensure a smooth transition for pupils moving to Year 7. For example, purposeful visits to the receiving secondary schools provide Year 6 pupils with worthwhile experiences of a broad range of subjects. As a result, these pupils are confident and excited about the move to the next stage of their education. In addition, the school has established close links with other schools in the consortium to improve pupils' digital competency. The very well-motivated and skilful digital leaders reflect the effectiveness of this strategic partnership.

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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