# A report on

# Llancaeach Junior School
# Commercial Street
# Nelson
# Treharris
# CF46 6NF

# Date of inspection:  November 2018

# by

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

## About Llancaeach Junior School

Llancaeach Junior School is situated in Nelson, in Caerphilly local authority. Currently, there are 133 pupils on roll, aged from seven to eleven years. There are five classes in total at the school, three of which are mixed-age.

About 22% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is slightly above the national average of 18%. The school identifies around 18% of pupils as having additional educational learning needs. This is lower than the national average of 21%. Nearly all pupils are from a white British background. Very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up post in September 2008. The school's last inspection was in February 2013.

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

The school is a caring environment where pupils feel valued, safe and happy.  Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the life and work of the school.  This is a notable feature and encourages pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning.

Many pupils make good progress in their learning as they move through the school.  Teachers develop strong working relationships with pupils and provide them with interesting activities that engage them well.  The standard of behaviour of nearly all pupils in lessons and around the school is high.

The headteacher provides strong, effective leadership.  Senior leaders have a clear vision for school improvement and share this well with all staff.  There is a clear sense of teamwork and all staff and the governing body work successfully together to ensure good quality education for pupils.

| Inspection area | Judgement |
|---|---|
| **Standards** | **Good** |
| **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning** | **Good** |
| **Teaching and learning experiences** | **Good** |
| **Care, support and guidance** | **Good** |
| **Leadership and management** | **Good** |

## Recommendations

R1  Improve pupils' spelling and punctuation skills across the school

R2  Ensure that teaching challenges pupils of all abilities, including the more able

R3  Increase the opportunities for pupils to use their Welsh language skills outside the classroom

## What happens next

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

## Main findings

**Standards:  Good**

Many pupils enter the school with skills that are at, or above, the level expected for their age.  During their time in school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress.  More able pupils do not always reach their full potential.

Most pupils develop effective oracy skills.  They listen attentively to adults and each other and they contribute well to discussions.  For example, older pupils consider facts and people's views sensibly when preparing an advertisement for different foods.  Many pupils express their opinions maturely and use a wide range of interesting vocabulary successfully.

Many pupils are developing their reading skills well and display an obvious interest in reading.   Many read fictional and non-fictional books successfully.  They have a good understanding of the ideas, characters and events in their chosen texts.  Many gather information from a wide variety of sources confidently and they use this effectively in their work, for example, when researching information on the water cycle and various historical topics.

Throughout the key stage, many pupils write successfully for a broad range of purposes.  By the end of the key stage, many pupils acquire an interesting vocabulary which enlivens their writing well.  For example, they produce stimulating discussions on why phones should be banned in schools and persuasive arguments for and against zoos.  They organise their writing well and use paragraphs appropriately.  Pupils generally present their work neatly and use a fluent handwriting style.  However, a minority of pupils do not spell well enough at times and they do not always punctuate their writing correctly.

Many pupils make good progress in learning Welsh and they have positive attitudes to the subject.  By the end of key stage 2, many read simple Welsh texts confidently.  They are able to translate and extract information successfully and they read their own work expressively.  Many older pupils write capable personal profiles, using correct sentence structures and the past tense.  However, pupils do not practise their Welsh language skills often enough outside of designated Welsh lessons.

Nearly all pupils make good progress in mathematics as they move through the school.  Most younger pupils identify halves and quarters of regular shapes and present information in a variety of ways successfully.  They solve written problems confidently, using their knowledge of multiplication facts accurately.  By the end of the key stage, most pupils multiply and divide decimals correctly and solve problems relating to temperatures, using negative numbers, well.  They simplify fractions to their lowest form and calculate the percentages of given sums of money accurately.  Throughout the school, nearly all pupils apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum well.  For example, during geography lessons, Year 3 pupils add and subtract sums of money correctly to calculate the costs of travelling to different countries.  Older pupils use their knowledge of perimeters, circumferences and circles successfully to create mandalas when studying different religious faiths.

Many pupils develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well in subjects across the curriculum.  They create graphs effectively and use ICT packages well to present their work, for example when preparing an information page on the Romans.  Most pupils use the internet safely to search for information and to check the validity of data.  Many pupils develop a good understanding of how to use spreadsheets to explore patterns and relationships and, by Year 6, they create a budget sheet to monitor expenditures.   Many pupils create simple animations or games, for example, by playing rock, paper, scissors using 'micro bits'.  Most can create movies from a range of sources, using electronic tablets.  Many pupils use quick response codes effectively to view their films.

**Wellbeing and attitudes to learning:  Good**

Nearly all pupils are polite, behave well and treat one another, staff and visitors with high levels of respect.  They interact harmoniously during breaktimes and participate co-operatively in team games, such as football and rugby, for extended periods of time.  Pupils are quick to help each other and the playground buddies help to keep everyone happy on the school yard.

Most pupils feel safe in school.  They know whom to turn to if they need support and are confident that a member of staff will deal with their concerns effectively.  Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep safe online.  Digital leaders provide valuable support for pupils by reinforcing important messages about e-safety.

Most pupils display positive attitudes towards their work and engage well in lessons.  They discuss current and previous learning enthusiastically and show an eagerness to learn new skills.  Nearly all pupils work effectively in pairs or in larger groups.  They cooperate well with others in their classes, for example, when making their own robots with moving parts from junk materials.  Most pupils are able to concentrate for extended periods of time and develop the ability to use strategies, such as 'ask 3', to enable them to solve problems themselves.  Across the school, most pupils contribute to their own learning successfully.  In Years 5 and 6 they work together effectively at the start of a topic to plan activities, for example when planning and writing the school Christmas play to be performed to parents.  Most pupils have a secure understanding of how to improve their own work and they use success criteria well to assess their work and that of others.

Nearly all pupils have a very good understanding of the need to eat healthily and to take part in regular physical exercise.  Most pupils bring a healthy snack to eat at break times and nearly all jog around the yard each day during 'healthy week'.  Many take part in a broad range of extra-curricular activities, such as football, netball and rugby, and a majority of pupils select a physically active option during weekly enrichment afternoons.

Most pupils are extremely proud of their school and take advantage of the many opportunities to express their opinion about important aspects of the school's work.  Members of various pupil groups, such as the 'wellbeing warriors', talk passionately about their role to improve outcomes for pupils in the school.  Most pupils develop well as ethical and informed citizens, for example through fundraising activities, such as the 'wear red' day, that they organise in support of a local hospital.  Pupils display care for others in their community, for example when playing board games with the residents of a local residential care home.

Many pupils respond positively to the school's keen focus on improving attendance, and they understand the importance of attending school regularly. Most are punctual at the start of the school day and arrive at school ready to begin learning.

## Teaching and learning experiences: Good

An exceptional feature of the school is the effective working relationships that exist between staff and pupils, where everyone treats each other with respect. This enables teachers and support staff to manage pupils' behaviour successfully and results in a very positive learning environment. Lesson presentations are clear and teachers explain new ideas in a meaningful way. Staff ensure that learning experiences build successfully on pupils' previous knowledge and skills. Teachers ask probing questions to deepen pupils' understanding and to develop their thinking skills. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace that supports pupils' learning well. Support staff make a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. However, teachers do not always challenge pupils, including the more able, well enough.

Teachers make appropriate use of a range of assessment strategies. They provide useful oral feedback during lessons in a constructive way that helps to promote pupils' self-confidence successfully. There are good examples of written feedback and pupils are encouraged to take the opportunity to improve their work by responding to teachers' comments. There are regular opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and that of their peers. This ensures that pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

Planning ensures that literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are at the centre of the school's provision. Whole-school plans are informative and detailed and cover the areas of the curriculum appropriately. The school implements the literacy and numeracy framework well and is making very good progress in developing its provision to meet the Digital Competence Framework.

Teachers deliver the curriculum through topic work, which engages pupils well. Topics, such as studies of robots, stimulate pupils' learning particularly effectively. Staff plan a range of exciting and engaging activities that encourage pupils to develop their creative skills. For example, as part of the creative schools programme, staff successfully promote pupils' oracy skills through musical composition and boys' writing skills through historical narrative writing. The provision places a strong emphasis on collaborative learning and teachers plan purposefully to ensure that pupils contribute meaningfully to class activities. The school adapts the curriculum well to meet the needs of pupils with additional learning needs.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in designated lessons are good. However, staff do not ensure that there are enough opportunities for pupils to practise their Welsh language skills in more informal situations around the school. The curriculum promotes Welsh history and culture successfully and provides a clear focus on the Welsh heritage and local places of interest. This contributes well to pupils' understanding of their local area, their history and culture. For example, pupils visit Llancaeach Fawr, Big Pit and the Rhondda Heritage Centre and they study a wide range of Welsh landscape artists, such as Kyffin Williams. Members of the community often visit the school, for example to describe their wartime experiences.

**Care, support and guidance:  Good**

The school is a very happy, caring community that nurtures pupils well and successfully promotes their confidence and self-esteem.  Leaders implement several positive behaviour strategies, such as 'good to be green,' which help to secure high standards of politeness and mutual respect.

The school has robust systems for tracking pupils' progress.  Teachers use the information well to identify pupils who need additional support and they arrange appropriate intervention programmes when necessary.  For example, the school has devised a mathematics scheme to provide a personalised learning journey for those pupils identified as underachieving.  Individual education targets for pupils with additional learning needs are detailed and pupils and parents play an important part in the process.  School staff regularly review pupils' progress and set new targets where appropriate.

The school provides pupils with many valuable opportunities to undertake leadership roles, that have a positive impact on their wellbeing and on the day-to-day life of the school.  For example, pupil groups, such as the wellbeing warriors, curriculum team, digital leaders and the criw Cymraeg, devise their own action plans to bring about improvements to the school's provision.  The headteacher meets regularly with members of the pupils' executive team to ensure that actions are planned carefully.  Pupil groups introduce important improvements to the school's provision, such as devising a list of 'non-negotiables' that appears on the success criteria in pupils' books.   This is a strong aspect of the school's work.

The school promotes the importance of healthy eating and drinking through a number of successful initiatives, for example during physical education sessions, weekly enrichment afternoons, annual 'healthy weeks' and extra-curricular sporting activities.  Teachers regularly use topic work to encourage pupils to eat healthily and Year 3 pupils devise a questionnaire to ask canteen staff about healthy choices.  The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to develop their understanding of moral and social matters.  The school's personal and social education programme contributes well to developing these aspects.  There are well-developed opportunities for pupils to build their awareness and understanding of other cultures, for example, Year 3 pupils learn about the lives of people in India.

The school communicates successfully with parents and develops productive relationships through various partnership activities.  There is an open door policy which provides regular opportunities for parents to share any concerns.  The school organises regular 'showcase' events which provide particularly worthwhile opportunities for parents to view their children's topic work**.**

**Leadership and management:  Good**

The headteacher's strong leadership sets a clear strategic direction for the school.  She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, teachers and support staff.  Team work is a strength of the school, where staff, pupils, parents and governors share a commitment to deliver the school's vision of 'Reaching Forward Together Inspiring Success'.

The headteacher distributes responsibilities effectively and all members of staff lead on specific areas of school life successfully.  They collaborate well to drive forward strategic priorities so as to ensure improved outcomes for pupils.  Leaders set high expectations of all members of staff and robust monitoring systems contribute effectively to the good quality provision in the school.

Leaders use a wide range of first-hand evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of the school.  The scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, classroom observations and analysis of assessment data provide leaders with useful information about its strengths and areas for development.  Teachers create highly effective subject-specific, improvement plans and they monitor and evaluate progress towards targets rigorously.  The school has a good track record of securing improvements and notable examples of success include an increase in the number of pupils achieving the expected outcomes in literacy, numeracy and science.  A recent initiative to involve pupil groups in creating, delivering and monitoring improvement plans is developing appropriately, but it is too early yet to measure its impact on the work and life of the school.

The performance management systems are effective.  All members of staff have access to a range of purposeful and successful training opportunities, which support their professional development well and link closely to the school's priorities for improvement.  For example, the training provided for a learning support assistant to deliver reading interventions has ensured that pupils with additional learning needs make good progress from their starting points.  Teachers have suitable opportunities to share good practice within the cluster of local schools.  For example, a joint project with local schools to improve pupils' wellbeing has enhanced pupils' self-confidence and resulted in very positive attitudes to school life.

There are effective arrangements to manage the school's budget and resources.  Leaders monitor the budget very carefully and regularly review programmes and activities to ensure that they are cost effective.  Members of staff are deployed efficiently and funding is allocated appropriately to address the school's priorities for improvement.  The pupil development grant is used purposefully to support those pupils eligible for free school meals and, as a result, they make good progress from their starting points.

The governing body is very supportive and knows the school well.  Governors meet regularly with the headteacher, curricular leaders and groups of pupils to discuss the work of the school.  Governors participate actively in the school's self-evaluation process through workshop activities and the scrutiny of pupils' work.  As a result, governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.  They have an effective understanding of their responsibilities as strategic partners and their role as critical friends is developing well.

## 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.