



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

**A report on**

**Ynysddu Primary School  
High Street  
Ynysddu  
NP11 7JH**

**Date of inspection: July 2019**

**by**

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

## About Ynysddu Primary School

Ynysddu Primary School is in the Sirhowy Valley, near Blackwood in the Caerphilly local authority. There are 127 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11, including 14 nursery age pupils who attend part-time. All pupils are of white British ethnicity. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

There are four mixed-age classes in the school, and a resourced provision comprising two further classes for up to 16 pupils with additional nurture and social inclusion needs, aged between 3 and 11 years. Pupils attend this provision for four days per week and most travel from outside the school's traditional catchment area.

The rolling average for the past three years means that about 24% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average of 19%. The school identifies around 18% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is slightly lower than the national average of 21%.

The headteacher also leads another primary school nearby and took up his post in April 2013. The school's last inspection was in July 2015.

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

Ynysddu Primary School is a well-ordered and caring community that promotes pupils' wellbeing successfully. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is excellent. Most pupils make appropriate progress from their individual starting points and those in the resource base make good progress. However, throughout the school, many teachers' practice constrains pupils' independence and does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to initiate and direct their own learning. As a result, pupils do not develop well as creative and independent learners. The headteacher's leadership is strong, and his organisational skills contribute well to the smooth running of the school. Leaders carry out regular monitoring of standards in teaching and learning, but this is not always rigorous enough to identify important shortcomings.

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

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Ensure that senior staff conduct monitoring processes rigorously to identify weaknesses in provision as well as standards
- R2 Improve provision in the foundation phase and key stage 2 so that it promotes active learning and develops pupils' independent learning skills
- R3 Improve the accuracy of pupils' writing and develop their higher-order reading skills in key stage 2
- R4 Improve pupils' skills in Welsh oracy, especially in key stage 2
- R5 Improve the effectiveness of teachers' written feedback to pupils, so that they know how to improve their work

## **What happens next**

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

## Main findings

### Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils make appropriate progress from their individual starting points and those in the resource base make good progress. Nearly all develop their speaking and listening skills well. In the resource base class, many pupils are able to converse fluently and with expression. However, a few are reluctant to speak to strangers or larger groups. Most pupils pay close attention to their teachers and listen respectfully to one another when discussing work with their thinking partners. Most pupils recall previous learning well, although a minority of pupils have misconceptions about scientific principles. For example, they describe how gravity pushes a parachute downwards.

Most pupils in the foundation phase make steady progress in learning to read. They develop a secure understanding of letters and sounds. Many decode unfamiliar words by breaking them down. However, a few pupils pass over difficult words or do not notice when they have misread a word and the sentence does not make sense. Many are beginning to read expressively.

In key stage 2, most pupils develop their reading skills suitably. They read aloud clearly and expressively, occasionally adding interest by adopting characters' voices. Younger pupils make good use of picture cues to help them understand their stories and older pupils are beginning to use context appropriately to aid their understanding of the text. Older pupils do not always search non-fiction books efficiently and attempt to scan every page to find the relevant information.

Most pupils in the foundation phase write for a suitably wide range of purposes. For example, when writing instructions for making a snack, they use basic punctuation well and spell familiar words correctly. Many pupils include suitably descriptive vocabulary in their stories and make sensible attempts at spelling more difficult words.

In key stage 2, many pupils make suitable progress in many aspects of writing. They write for a range of reasons and show a growing awareness of how to match their style to suit their purpose and their intended audience. When learning and practising specific skills, such as the features of persuasive texts or the correct use of speech marks, most pupils generally achieve well. However, many pupils do not consistently transfer these skills to their attempts at independent writing. Many include devices like similes and personification well to add interest to their independent writing, although much of their work is unoriginal and lacks flair. However, many pupils in key stage 2 do not write as neatly or as carefully as they should, so that frequent mistakes in spelling and punctuation detract notably from the quality of their writing. Most apply their literacy skills well across the curriculum. For example, they produce clear and informative science reports when explaining the water cycle.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop their mathematical skills well. They work carefully, performing basic calculations accurately. They apply their skills well across the curriculum. For example, they solve money problems and draw graphs to show how far different pupils can throw a ball. Most pupils in the resource base classes use their understanding of division to solve simple problems. Their understanding is linked to their growing knowledge of the concept of sharing objects.

Many pupils in key stage 2 make good progress in practising their skills in a suitably broad range of aspects of mathematics. Most work neatly, methodically and accurately. However, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum often enough.

Nearly all pupils make strong progress in developing their skills in information and communication technology (ICT). In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils use laptop computers confidently for a broad range of purposes. They programme miniature robots to negotiate a set course and carry out word-processing to present their writing effectively. In key stage 2, most pupils develop their ICT skills well to communicate their ideas, to handle data efficiently and to model varying scenarios. They use a range of software to communicate their ideas effectively. For example, they create hyperlinked multimedia presentations about Patagonia, present and search for information in databases efficiently and use a spreadsheet appropriately to record pupils' attendance at the many after-school clubs.

Within the foundation phase, most pupils begin to count in Welsh and use the Welsh words for colours, the weather and everyday objects. They respond appropriately to instructions. Most pupils in key stage 2 have a positive attitude towards the Welsh language. Their writing is generally accurate but depends strongly on following a given model and they rarely write independently. Most pupils' oral skills in Welsh are limited because they do not recall vocabulary and sentence patterns well enough to engage in simple conversations.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Nearly all pupils enjoy school and feel safe and secure. They show care and respect for one another and for adults and contribute strongly to the friendly and family-like ethos that characterises the school. Most pupils understand clearly the importance of eating healthily and of taking regular exercise. They support the fruit and vegetable tuckshop and take full advantage of opportunities for exercise at break times, in after-school clubs and during the daily mile walk around the playground. Nearly all pupils know how to keep safe when using the internet.

Nearly all pupils behave very well in and around the school. They play well together and settle any disagreements amicably. Older pupils support the younger ones well and look out for anyone who is looking for company on the buddy bench. Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They settle quickly to their work and co-operate successfully with others in pairs and in groups. Nearly all show resilience and perseverance when they find tasks challenging. However, pupils' contribution to making decisions about what and how they learn is limited. They are eager to please their teachers and follow instructions carefully but take few independent decisions about how to work creatively within lessons.

Many pupils play a full role in the life of the school. For example, groups, such as the digital leaders take their responsibilities seriously, ensuring that other pupils know how to stay safe on-line. The 'Learning Spies' initiative is a notable feature, in which more vulnerable pupils across the school visit classrooms and talk to their peers about teaching and learning. For example, they surveyed pupils' understanding of their teachers' marking code. As a result, the code was modified to improve pupils' understanding. The Criw Cymraeg promote the use of Welsh through their phrase of

the week. Pupils take pride in the extensive outdoor areas and ensure they remain well cared for. Most pupils are developing an understanding of issues relating to the wider world and speak knowledgably about the problem of plastic pollution and climate change.

Pupils play an active role in the local community. The eco-committee has helped to set up test tubes to monitor air quality around the village. Pupils sing at the local church at Christmas and Easter and attend Remembrance Day services at the local memorial. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually, and rates of attendance are consistently high, placing the school in the top 25% compared with similar schools.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement**

All teachers and support staff establish very positive working relationships with pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour well and this creates a calm and purposeful learning environment. They use praise effectively to help pupils approach new learning experiences confidently. However, in around half of classes, tasks do not always meet the needs of all pupils well enough. This means that the school provides insufficient challenge for pupils who are more able. In these classes, teachers have low expectations of pupils and do not regularly provide opportunities for them to overcome difficulties and to learn from their mistakes.

In the two specialist resource bases, support staff and teachers work closely and use a wide variety of teaching approaches and specialist resources effectively. They engage extremely well with the pupils in their care. For example, they use party food to demonstrate and explore sharing and the formal division of numbers.

Teaching assistants engage with pupils well and provide valuable support to vulnerable pupils by enabling them to engage with classroom activities successfully.

In the foundation phase, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for the youngest pupils to learn through play and the provision does not conform well to the principles of the foundation phase. Staff over-direct learning and much of it is passive rather than pupils being actively engaged in stimulating activities. The school's curriculum does not allow enough opportunities for younger pupils to learn in the school's impressive outdoor environment.

Teachers' planning ensures that pupils benefit from worthwhile opportunities to develop appropriate literacy, mathematical and ICT skills as they move through the school. The school is implementing the digital competence framework effectively. Whole-school planning supports staff in developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in a way that is appropriate for their age. For example, in key stage 2, teachers encourage pupils to use challenging vocabulary to improve their descriptions of a forest. However, in many classes, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to apply their skills independently in engaging and challenging contexts. The school is beginning to look at aspects of its curriculum in line with curriculum reform for Wales, but this is at an early stage of development.

Many teachers share clear learning objectives with pupils. However, they do not always provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to evaluate the success of their work or understand how to improve it. Teachers provide pupils with helpful verbal feedback during lessons. However, their written feedback to pupils, while encouraging, does not always move pupils' learning forward purposefully.

Staff provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn about their cultural heritage through activities related to Welsh art and landmarks. For example, pupils write inventive poetry based on a view of Port Talbot Steelworks and learn about the history of the ironworks in Merthyr Tydfil. Pupils have engaged with a joint creativity project with other schools. As a result, they designed and built a 'story chair' which has contributed to imaginative story telling.

The school supports pupils with additional learning needs effectively. For example, the introduction of new reading materials has helped struggling readers to better understand and discuss texts. This has had a positive effect on pupils' ability and desire to read independently. The school is developing its provision to meet the digital competence framework well. For example, the teacher responsible for overseeing the delivery of the framework has set out a clear programme to ensure that the curriculum supports high levels of pupil engagement, ensuring that all staff understand how to develop pupils' digital skills in a range of contexts.

School visits enhance pupils' experiences well. For example, visiting the Museum of Welsh Life at St Fagan's helps key stage 2 pupils to improve their understanding of what it was like to be a pupil in a Victorian school.

The school's provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills is under-developed. Few staff model the Welsh language well, and they do not consistently expect pupils to use Welsh language during lessons.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school is a calm and inclusive environment. All staff know pupils well, show great concern for their wellbeing and respond sensitively to pupils' needs. Arrangements to support pupils socially and emotionally are effective. The school provides good opportunities for vulnerable pupils to improve their self-esteem, for example through the 'Learning Spies' group. However, opportunities for pupils to have a voice in what they learn are at an early stage of development.

Teachers track pupils' progress carefully and intervene promptly when this falls below expectations. The school's additional learning needs coordinator uses data effectively to allocate support for identified pupils. Leaders review pupils' progress each term and use this information to amend their provision appropriately.

The school has productive relationships with a range of outside agencies, such as the educational psychology service, the local authority behaviour team and specialist literacy and numeracy advisers. The teachers in the resource base help to ensure that provision for vulnerable pupils in the mainstream school is enhanced through their purposeful links with other schools.

The school works closely with parents and carers to make sure that they understand the support that is being provided. For example, teachers recently changed the timing of education plan review appointments from day to evening so that working parents and carers could attend. This has improved rates of engagement.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. It offers a worthwhile range of extra-curricular activities that encourages pupils to be



active, such as gardening at the local allotment and sports events. The school also provides information on healthy lunch box choices and rewards pupils who set a good example. Staff ensure that pupils understand how to stay safe online.

The school arranges for pupil voice groups to be inclusive and that they have a positive impact on school life. For example, the eco committee raised awareness of the need for recycling by organising a 'Fantastic Fashion Show' that demonstrated the positive impact of wearing pre-owned clothing.

Pupils are provided with worthwhile opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. For example, teachers and support staff lead extra-curricular groups that provide pupils with opportunities to perform as part of the school choir at the neighbouring chapel and care home. Enrichment activities, such as beekeeping, provide opportunities for pupils to develop as ethical citizens who show concern for the natural world. Pupils are taught to care for those less fortunate than themselves through fund-raising activities, such as the craft sale to raise money for the Dreams and Wishes charity for seriously ill children.

The school makes pupils aware of the beliefs and celebrations associated with different faiths well. For example, pupils explain why Ramadan is important to Muslims. Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills through an extra-curricular dance group and whole-class music lessons.

Staff in the specialist resource bases provide a wide range of learning experiences for the pupils. They utilise a variety of stimulating resources to ensure that pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to pupils' individual needs.

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

### **Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher, have created a highly inclusive school where each pupil is valued and cared for. Leaders at all levels focus on pupils' wellbeing effectively to provide good opportunities to promote them as mature and confident members of the school community.

The headteacher has established a suitable leadership structure to enable the senior leadership team to work across two schools. He has managed a period of significant change in teaching personnel well, maintaining stability by putting in place suitable policies and procedures that ensure the smooth running of the school. Staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Leaders at all levels are involved suitably in school improvement. For example, the teacher leading the implementation of the digital competence framework ensures that this is embedded well in the school. Leaders take good account of the need to begin to work towards the new curriculum. For example, a member of staff led a creative schools initiative that has promoted creative storytelling in school well. The additional learning needs co-ordinator leads the work of the two specialist classes very effectively. She is knowledgeable and has a clear sense of how nurture can be used to reduce the difficulties experienced by pupils in the provisions.

The governing body meets regularly and conducts its meetings efficiently. It fulfils its statutory duties appropriately. Most governors know the school well and are very supportive. They recognise the high standards of pupils' wellbeing in the school from first-hand experience. However, their experience of what the pupils can and cannot do is limited and restricts their ability to challenge the school about standards. They act as critical friends in a few areas. For example, they challenged the school over a dip in attendance in a previous year.

There are appropriate procedures for leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Activities include learning walks, lesson observations, scrutiny of books and regular reviews of individual pupils' progress. Senior leaders recognise the school's strengths. However, outcomes of self-evaluation tend to be too positive and do not identify areas for improvement well enough. Consequently, they have not identified inadequacies in foundation phase provision, shortcomings in the quality of teaching or the lack of opportunity for pupils to develop as creative and resilient independent learners.

Planning for improvement focuses on a manageable number of relevant priorities that address many of the self-evaluation exercise's findings. It identifies clearly actions, responsibilities and costs. However, because self-evaluation has not identified a number of important shortcomings in provision, the school's priorities are not necessarily those that will bring about required improvements. Previous plans have contributed towards improved standards. The improvement in pupils' skill levels in ICT is a noteworthy outcome of previous improvement planning.

Leaders create a strong culture of professional development. The partnership with the neighbouring school provides valuable opportunities for teachers to work together and to learn from one another's practice. Teaching assistants receive effective training in the use of intervention programmes in literacy and numeracy that have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Staff training focuses purposefully on improving pupils' wellbeing. For example, autism awareness training ensures that the school caters well for pupils with these needs.

The school manages its finances well. Governors and senior leaders monitor the budget carefully to ensure that they spend money as planned and that the school achieves value for money. Finances are directed to support national and local priorities appropriately. The school uses its pupil development grant imaginatively and purposefully to provide for pupils eligible for free school meals. For example, the grant supports small-group intervention strategies which ensure that vulnerable pupils achieve as well as others.

## 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))

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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