



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

A report on

Radnor Valley C.P. School

**New Radnor
Presteigne
Powys
LD8 2SS**

Date of inspection: February 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Radnor Valley C.P. School

Name of provider	Radnor Valley C.P. School
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	49
Pupils of statutory school age	40
Number in nursery classes	
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%)	13.6%
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%)	16%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	September 2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	24/06/2014
Start date of inspection	13/02/2023

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

Radnor Valley County Primary School is an inviting, nurturing place to learn. The headteacher leads a small team of energetic teachers, many of whom are at the beginning of their profession. School staff strive to improve all aspects of school life and professional working relationships across the school are a strength. Pupils are keen to come to school, parents feel they are included in the life of the school and governors are heavily involved in ensuring that the school is a safe and happy place to be.

Throughout the school, pupils' behaviour is exceptional and they often engage positively with their learning. Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn more about the heritage and culture of Wales, beginning at their doorstep, and especially enjoy learning and practising the language. As a result, pupils become confident speakers, readers and writers and their enthusiasm spills into the community, where local businesses are now keen to practice the language too. Across the school, pupils develop extremely positive attitudes to reading and make accelerated progress in developing their reading skills. They use digital skills well and make the most of opportunities to be active, especially in the school's extensive, natural outdoor environment. Many develop good mathematical skills and knowledge but do not use these skills often enough in their work across the curriculum. They do not always build systematically on literacy or creative skills coherently enough to make the progress they are capable of. Teachers use questioning well and provide pupils with appropriate guidance to support their learning during lessons.

The school is developing its understanding of how pupils make progress but this is at an early stage of development and arrangements to monitor pupils' progress over time are less secure. Teachers include pupils' ideas when planning learning experiences and when choosing how to learn during lessons. From a young age, pupils are keen to do well. They develop as articulate learners and follow instructions carefully when completing work. However, pupils do not generally have enough opportunities to learn in a wide enough variety of ways to enable them to become independent learners. They do not learn in enough depth across the curriculum.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen leadership capacity in order to address improvement priorities
- R2 Develop teaching to secure effective progress for all pupils, and learning experiences that allow pupils to explore concepts in enough depth
- R3 Provide opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their learning and develop as independent learners

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the work of its governing body, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

The majority of pupils enter Reception with literacy, numeracy and personal skills at the expected level. A few pupils enter with skills below the expected level. By the end of Year 6, nearly all pupils make suitable progress in many areas of the curriculum.

Overall, pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well and make good progress. The youngest pupils happily chat with visitors when showing them around their classroom and older pupils confidently discuss their work. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils speak clearly in a variety of contexts. As they move through the school, most pupils listen attentively during lessons and respond appropriately to others using an increasingly sophisticated and technical range of vocabulary.

Across the school, pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills. A few make very good progress and use their reading skills well in other aspects of the curriculum. As they move through the school, they use an increasing range of strategies to help them make sense of unfamiliar words and use inference skills competently to explore characters in the books they read. By the end of their time in school, many pupils are expressive readers and have developed a love of reading. They enjoy choosing books in the well-resourced and stimulating library. Pupils often read as well in Welsh as in English. For example, pupils in Year 4 confidently and accurately read from Welsh language play scripts in group reading sessions.

Most pupils develop appropriate writing skills during their time at school. Younger pupils construct simple sentences to describe a dragon and successfully record the properties of shapes they are exploring. Older pupils write biographies, stories and news reports. They generally write well, using a range of sentence structures to add interest to their work and include vocabulary chosen to engage the reader. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 demonstrate a secure understanding of what makes a good story and relate this to the books they have read. Across the school, pupils' understanding of grammar is less secure and they often make errors in their spelling of important words.

From a young age, pupils develop basic Welsh language skills, animatedly greeting their teachers and visitors. By the time they reach Year 3, many pupils use Welsh comments in their peer assessments and, by Year 4, read basic Welsh texts accurately, making phonetically plausible attempts at unfamiliar words.

Many pupils develop sound mathematical knowledge as they progress through the school. The youngest pupils describe similarities and differences between a given set of shapes and manipulate lollipop sticks, adding and removing sides to change one shape into another. By Year 2, many solve number problems using addition and subtraction and by Year 6 they gather and represent data confidently when calculating the profit made at the Christmas fayre, displaying the results in line graphs. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills at the same level across the curriculum are limited.

Nearly all pupils develop their digital skills well. Pupils in Year 3 use animation programmes effectively to make short films. They use word processing programs to write articles for the school newspaper, 'The Radnor Reader'. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 produce bilingual presentations on their favourite Welsh heroes and local artists. They manipulate text and images competently to create eye-catching designs for multi-media publications. Nearly all pupils store and retrieve their work efficiently.

Pupils are beginning to develop their creativity and expression. The youngest pupils paint self-portraits and mimic the style of Welsh artists when creating images of the locality. Older pupils mix colours and use a range of tools and media such as chalk and palette knives to create different effects in their work. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 combine their knowledge of the history of Wales with their imagination when writing folk tales. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 learn to play tuned instruments and enjoy dance sessions where they develop their understanding of how movement is a form of expression. In the outdoors, pupils build dens and work together to solve problems and challenges. Generally, however, pupils do not have enough opportunities to refine their artistic skills or their creativity across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop their physical skills well through a variety of experiences and activities. The youngest pupils ride bicycles and demonstrate good balance, agility and control. Older pupils learn to pass and receive during team sports. Throughout the school, pupils explore ways of moving their bodies to create dance, building on the early skills they learn to develop patterns and sequences and to move in unison. Older pupils in particular enjoy taking part in a range of sports such as tag rugby, netball and cross-country running.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The dedicated staff at the school make pupils' well-being a daily focus. The positive relationships they build with them are a strong feature of the school. As a result, pupils feel safe, knowing that there is always staff to help them. They develop secure values and a strong sense of responsibility and, as a result, behaviour is exemplary.

Nearly all pupils are respectful towards staff, friends, and visitors to the school. They listen attentively to others and act with kindness. Older pupils interact positively with younger pupils, for example when playing together at lunchtime. When creating a 'bug house', the older pupils help the younger pupils to structure the 'build' and ask questions that create a sense of purpose and excitement. Younger pupils develop strategies for self-regulation through a beneficial range of experiences and, as pupils move through the school, they draw on these strategies when needed, improving their well-being, relationships and participation.

Pupils have a growing awareness of their roles as responsible citizens who actively influence their own lives and the lives of others in their community and beyond. They share their ideas on how to improve safety and inclusion, and support local businesses by buying produce grown in the area. They support the local community, for example by advertising charity events and important dates in the calendar in the school newspaper.

Throughout the school, pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make significant contributions that influence the life of the school. They engage in an

effective range of democratic processes and are fully involved in decision-making when recruiting new staff. Older pupils enthusiastically take on leadership responsibilities and many pupils throughout the school contribute their own ideas and opinions about school life through group representatives. The School Council improve the range of sports equipment available and the 'Cryw Cymraeg' encourage Welsh activities, for example through an awards system. The Eco Committee is particularly influential in developing ideas to raise awareness around sustainability. They arrange art competitions and carry out a range of recycling and composting projects.

Most pupils know why making healthy choices is important and understand the impact of eating a balanced diet and drinking water. They generally make healthy choices during the school day. Pupils enjoy opportunities to participate in a range of physical activities and explore the effects of exercise on their bodies. They make the most of the time they spend outdoors in the extensive and well-equipped school grounds, exercising on the trim-trail, playing games on the yard and enjoying nature in the forest area.

Most pupils engage well with their learning. They are keen to come to school and this has a positive impact on their attendance and punctuality. During lessons, pupils sustain concentration and interest. They listen well, ask and answer questions appropriately and willingly talk about their learning. They work effectively in pairs and small groups when given the opportunity, contributing to tasks and sharing their ideas. Many pupils recall prior learning effectively and a few pupils link their learning to their experience successfully. For example, in Year 2, pupils compare 2D shapes to similar 3D shapes they are familiar with. Pupils in Year 6 link new historical information to current events and modern cultures.

During directed activities, younger pupils work well independently and make a few choices about their learning such as choosing the materials they work with and how they record their work. However, opportunities for pupils to make choices about how they learn, to understand the purpose of their learning and to explore their learning independently are limited. They make useful comments on each other's work but do not generally set their own goals often enough.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff develop nurturing relationships with pupils. They have high expectations of behaviour and, as a result, the learning environment is calm and inviting.

Where teaching is effective, the pace of lessons engages pupils and enables them to make good progress in their learning. Teachers use open questioning purposefully, address misconceptions and adjust their teaching to support pupils appropriately. They share clear expectations, which supports pupils' understanding of what to do and creates worthwhile opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts. For example, when they discuss examples of their story writing, they compare the plot of Welsh tales to life today.

The school has a clear vision for the school's curriculum focussed on concepts such as belonging, inspiration and 'cynefin'. Teachers across the school are beginning to

develop authentic learning experiences through the areas of learning and experience (AoLEs). They carefully consider the locality, the history and culture of Wales when planning units of work. Younger pupils explore the differing landscapes of Wales and older pupils learn about landmarks nearer to home.

Teachers are beginning to plan sequences of lessons that enable pupils to transfer aspects of their knowledge and skills to other areas of the curriculum. Younger pupils develop their understanding of empathy when creating an imaginary dragon who is new to the school. Older pupils consider the link between the need for oxygen and global deforestation. Teachers plan particularly well for pupils to apply their digital skills to support and enhance their work. Teachers are beginning to develop pupils' knowledge of mathematical concepts systematically. However, they do not plan to develop numeracy and literacy skills coherently enough to ensure that there are no gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.

As teachers develop their knowledge of the curriculum, they are beginning to plan relevant learning experiences for pupils. They provide increasing opportunities for pupils to make choices about how they learn. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils choose to incorporate design software into their work about the local area. However, teachers do not allow pupils to explore their learning independently, work collaboratively or challenge themselves often enough. Although teachers plan a broad range of experiences for pupils, often these experiences do not allow pupils to explore concepts in enough depth.

The school's learning support assistants are highly effective in supporting pupils to make progress, and often accelerated progress, in their learning. They use questioning well and model language effectively to support them. During intervention sessions, they provide strong support for vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs.

Teachers have recently implemented a consistent approach to assessing pupils' skills and are developing useful formative assessment approaches that support pupils to make progress. The joint learning conversation approach enables pupils to plan for next steps in their learning and to suggest how other pupils can improve their work during lessons.

Teachers are working with partner schools to develop a shared understanding of progression in response to curriculum reform. However, overall, planning for progression across the curriculum is at an early stage of development. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of over time.

The school provides thoughtful opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the history and culture of Wales. They explore the landscape, learning about mountains, rivers, cities and villages. They collaborate with Welsh artists, celebrate special days and write about influential Welsh citizens. Across the school, teachers provide plentiful opportunities for pupils to learn Welsh. As a result, they use Welsh confidently in lessons. For example, in their lessons on shape, pupils in the youngest class refer to them as 'triogyl' and 'petryal'. They develop an impressive ability to read Welsh and produce interesting pieces of written work. The strong commitment from staff and pupils to communicate in Welsh has a positive impact on language development across the school and into the wider community.

Teachers plan to develop pupils' understanding of relationships and diversity in lessons and through collective worship. They consider the rights of the child when developing friendships and dealing with problems. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to experience and learn about the diversity across Wales and globally.

Pupils enjoy learning in the school's well-developed outdoor environment. They utilise nature well in their planning and, on occasion, provide opportunities for rich learning experiences. For example, pupils pick apples from the orchard, visit a pressing and bottling plant and prepare apple juice to sell at the Christmas fayre.

Care, support and guidance

Staff create a warm and compassionate ethos where everyone is valued and encouraged, and the well-being of staff and pupils is considered a high priority. All pupils and staff feel safe and valued in this nurturing environment. The high levels of inclusion contribute to the outstanding behaviour of pupils and support them to make and maintain positive relationships.

The school develops pupils' understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle well. Staff encourage pupils to bring wholesome lunches from home and make healthy choices in school. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to be active through a wide range of resources available at breaktimes, lunchtime clubs, swimming lessons and physical education sessions. During well-being sessions, pupils take part in beneficial exercises, which allow them to practise strategies for regulating their own behaviour.

The headteacher ensures that the school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is clear and arrangements to identify pupils' additional needs are effective. Across the school, staff plan a range of worthwhile interventions that significantly reduce barriers to learning for individual pupils. Governors are purposefully involved in evaluating pupil experiences. They monitor the quality of learning and experiences with pupils and make changes to provision when needed. Staff share information with each other regularly to ensure that pupils receive the focused support best suited to their needs.

The school's approach to including pupils in decision-making is a strength. Pupils' views are integral to school improvement, and they often influence change. They take on leadership roles and responsibilities with gusto and actively promote respect for the community and the wider world. Team captains in sporting activities take their role seriously and pupil news reporters make decisions about what information to share with the local community. Pupils in Year 6 thoroughly enjoy their residential visit where they gain a sense of adventure and further opportunities to transfer leadership skills. Teachers include pupils' ideas about what they want to learn in their planning. However, during lessons, activities are often over-directed and pupils do not develop as independent learners as well as they could.

The school supports pupils' well-being successfully. Staff across the school establish positive relationships with them and have a secure understanding of their individual strengths and vulnerabilities. The school provides a thoughtful range of well-being support, beginning with a positive start to the day at the popular breakfast club.

Pupils enjoy sharing breakfast with others and the opportunity to be creative and expressive early in the morning. Staff encourage pupils to share their worries and concerns sensitively and ensure their privacy. As a result, pupils feel relaxed and excited to start their day.

Daily acts of collective worship provide regular opportunities for the school to explore faith and celebrate achievements. Staff and pupils reflect on values and contemplate how they can reflect these in their own lives. The school arranges fundraising events for local and national charities and raises awareness about issues that affect the local community and people globally such as climate change.

Pupils across the school are fully aware of the need to stay safe online and use a range of strategies successfully to protect themselves. The school's processes to promote positive rates of attendance are effective. Its arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads a team of teachers and support staff who have created a happy and safe environment where everyone feels a strong sense of belonging. Together they have established a clear vision for the school focused on high expectations and creating a community where everyone is encouraged, valued and respected. Relationships across the school are exemplary and as a result nearly all pupils are friendly and enthusiastic.

The school is committed to supporting pupils and their families. Its partnership with parents is a strength and parents are especially appreciative of the high levels of communication between home and school, and the valuable information they receive about their child's well-being and progress.

The school secures well-being for all pupils through a range of purposeful, tailored measures, many of which address the impact of social disadvantage. The headteacher works well with outside agencies to secure improvement for vulnerable children, for example to ensure equitable access to enriched curriculum experiences for all pupils. She drives additional learning needs reform successfully, ensuring that teachers and learning support assistants meet pupils' needs well across the school.

The headteacher makes purposeful arrangements to evaluate the school's work. Together with teachers, she regularly monitors the impact of improvement work through a cycle of reflection and review, which informs future plans for improvement. The school's strategy for developing the Welsh language is successful and its focus on improving reading has had a significant impact on pupils' skills as well as their enjoyment of reading at school and at home. The headteacher works closely with teachers to review and refine the school's curriculum during the transition to the Curriculum for Wales. Together they have considered the needs, interests and aspirations of the pupils, and the wealth of experiences and history available in their surrounding area. The headteacher and teachers are beginning to explore approaches to planning for progress in learning. However, this is at an early stage of development.

The headteacher ensures that all staff have access to opportunities to support their professional development. They work with a wide range of external organisations to inform practice and share the outcomes of their personal research. They work closely with partner schools to develop effective support for pupils, for example as they transfer to the secondary school. However, plans for professional learning do not always focus closely enough on improving the quality and range of teaching approaches.

Performance management procedures focus suitably on the school improvement priorities identified. Targets link well to national priorities and professional standards. The headteacher regularly reviews progress with teaching staff and teachers respond well to the support they receive. The headteacher provides assured leadership, developing a culture of continuous improvement with a passionate team of teachers who are new to the profession. Following significant changes to leadership and teaching staff, she has appropriately focused on developing teachers' understanding of the new curriculum and as a result they are beginning to take responsibility for developing aspects of this. However, the current reduced capacity in leadership across school has resulted in limited opportunities to address important aspects in the quality of teaching that impact on the quality of learning.

The governing body is highly effective in its support for the school. Governors are regularly involved in self-evaluation processes, undertaking monitoring activities in partnership with the headteacher, teachers and pupils. They have a good understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and are beginning to challenge leaders successfully as a critical friend and suggest changes to better support the needs of learners. The partnership work between governors and pupils is a strength of the school. Governors make time to gather pupils' opinions on the life of the school and their learning experiences and support them when change is needed.

The headteacher and governors monitor spending plans and their impact efficiently. The school allocates its grant funding effectively to ensure equity of experience for all pupils. For example, the school uses the pupil development grant to put in place a range of measures to address the impact of poverty, such as the use of additional staff to support learning through intervention groups.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Overall, staff and governors maintain a strong safeguarding culture at the school.

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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Publication date: 19/04/2023