



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

A report on

Tongwynlais Primary School

**Merthyr Road
Tongwynlais
Cardiff
CF15 7LF**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Tongwynlais Primary School

Name of provider	Tongwynlais Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	197
Pupils of statutory school age	145
Number in nursery classes	24
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%)	20.2%
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%)	7.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	8.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	17/04/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/12/2017
Start date of inspection	05/06/2023

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

The pupils at Tongwynlais Primary School enjoy coming to school and take part in lessons and activities with great enthusiasm. Staff know their pupils well and work effectively to ensure that they are happy and safe when they are at school. The school's support for pupils' well-being is strong and staff work successfully to cater for pupils' individual needs and to address any issues or worries that they may have. The school is aware of the challenges that some families may have as a result of deprivation and is working thoughtfully and sensitively to ensure that this does not negatively affect the learning experiences of their children.

Teachers plan engaging learning activities that often capture the interest of pupils and make them keen to learn. They include pupils well in the planning of topics, lessons and learning activities, and this is one of the reasons that pupils find their lessons so interesting. However, the activities that teachers plan do not always focus clearly enough on the next steps in pupils' learning. As well as this, the curriculum does not ensure that pupils build effectively on their previous learning as they move through the school. Generally, pupils make good progress with their literacy, numeracy and thinking skills but their ability to understand and use the Welsh language is underdeveloped.

The leadership structure for the federation is going through a period of change. The headteacher is new to his role, having previously been the deputy headteacher for the federation. Building upon his former position, he has continued to successfully develop positive working relationships with staff and parents across both schools. Leaders and governors are keen to make the most of the advantages of being part of a federation, for instance by using existing strengths in one provider to make improvements in the other. They are aware that leadership responsibilities are not distributed equally or effectively enough at the moment and that too many important areas are currently overseen by the headteacher in addition to his wider strategic role.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that leadership responsibilities are distributed effectively and focus on improving outcomes for pupils
- R2 Improve the quality and consistency of teaching
- R3 Ensure that the curriculum develop pupils' skills and knowledge progressively and meets statutory requirements
- R4 Raise standards in Welsh

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.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils make good progress in a many of areas of learning, such as in their reading and their thinking skills. However, they do not develop their knowledge and skills in Welsh well enough. Overall, during their time at school, a few pupils do not always make the progress they could in their learning. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make sound progress towards their individual targets.

Most pupils develop their speaking and listening skills effectively. In nursery and reception, most pupils talk excitedly about things that are important to them and explain in good detail things they have learned, such as how to take care of the bees in their beehive. Many listen to instructions well and respond appropriately. As they progress through the school, they continue to develop these skills well. By Year 6, many speak in detail about events from their lives, such as explaining the litter they saw on a beach and the actions they took to help clear it. Nearly all listen respectfully to adults and to each other. They talk together in small groups maturely to share their ideas.

Many pupils develop strong reading skills. They demonstrate an enthusiasm and positive engagement with reading and with books. In reception, pupils enjoy looking at books in the book corner and use their understanding of letters and sounds well to read simple words. They talk about the stories they are reading and explain in detail what is happening. By Year 3, many pupils read enthusiastically at a level appropriate to their stage of development. By Year 6, many pupils have effective reading skills and enjoy reading a broad range of texts. They have an in-depth understanding of stories they have read and use this to consider and explain the actions of characters thoughtfully.

Many pupils develop their writing skills effectively. In reception, many pupils begin to write confidently for a suitable range of purposes, for instance writing simple sentences to create party invitations. By Year 2 most pupils write appropriately in a variety of ways and use an interesting vocabulary to enliven their work. However, a minority do not spell or use punctuation well enough. By Year 6, many pupils write for a good range of purposes and understand the features of different forms of writing well. They use a good range of vocabulary to enliven their work, and their spelling is mostly accurate. Many write to a similar standard in their work across the curriculum.

Throughout the school pupils do not develop their Welsh language skills well enough. In nursery many pupils answer the register simply and enjoy singing Welsh songs. By Year 2, many pupils speak hesitantly using a few appropriate words and phrases,

such as when asking others how they are. A very few give extended responses, for instance responding in full sentences to questions about the weather. Many pupils engage enthusiastically in Welsh sessions, but by Year 6 they only use a few simple words and phrases with confidence.

Many pupils develop effective mathematics and numeracy skills. In reception they develop early counting skills quickly and begin to understand concepts, such as sequencing appropriately. By Year 2, many pupils have an appropriate range of number skills, such as adding and multiplying, and use these confidently. By Year 6, many pupils have a sound understanding of mathematical concepts and how to apply them in their learning. They have a broad range of number skills, such as the ability to multiply and divide accurately. A majority apply these skills well to solving problems and to real-life situations, such as finding the percentage decrease in the cost of items in a sale.

Many pupils develop a useful range of digital skills and use these to enhance their work across the curriculum well. However, they do not always progress strongly enough in a few areas, such as the use of spreadsheets and databases. In reception, pupils use their digital skills competently to record others retelling the story of the Rainbow Fish. In Year 1, a majority of pupils develop sequencing and thinking skills well when programming a small robot bee to move in a set pattern. Older pupils log on to their online classroom independently to create presentations and to complete tasks assigned by their teacher. By Year 5 and Year 6, many pupils make imaginative presentations to share their work, for instance on the rainforest. A few pupils understand and uses basic coding, and a very few have a limited understanding of how to use or create a simple spreadsheet.

Many pupils across the school develop effective and beneficial thinking skills. In Year 1 pupils use their topic of 'Flight' to develop an investigation using an anemometer they have made themselves to measure the strength of the wind in various parts of the school. In Year 6 pupils demonstrate well-embedded thinking skills. They use a range of strategies to consider and explain elements of their learning skilfully. For example, they consider cause and effect to explain the plot developments in their class book.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

As a result of the high priority staff place on pupils' well-being, there is a warm and welcoming atmosphere at the school. Most pupils feel safe, secure, and happy. They know who to speak to if they have any concerns and that staff will listen to them and take appropriate action. Most pupils are respectful to staff, their peers, and visitors to the school.

Most pupils listen well to each other in lessons and show respect for others' ideas and suggestions. For example, in Year 6 pupils listen and respond sensitively to others' views on pollution and how it can be tackled. The school has an effective behaviour strategy and, as a result, nearly all pupils have a good understanding of the importance of abiding by the agreed rules. In a few cases, where behaviour is challenging, this is dealt with effectively by staff, and pupils are quick to return to task.

Many pupils sustain focus and avoid distractions well. They show a real interest in their work, and enthusiasm when they do something new. For example, pupils in Year 1 demonstrate genuine excitement when learning about magnetism and investigating which materials are magnetic. Across the school, pupils share and talk about their learning eagerly.

Most pupils enjoy school and the range of extracurricular clubs on offer that support them to develop their physical and creative skills. The school's pupil voice groups make a positive contribution to school life. For example, the school council enthusiastically engaged in sharing their ideas when designing playground zones that encourage pupils to be active at lunch and break times. The recent appointment of the Super Ambassadors is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' understanding of their rights as a child and the impact they can have within the school, for example through the planning and creating of a second-hand uniform shed where families can exchange items of school uniform.

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, for instance through participating in a range of worthwhile fundraising activities. Pupils understand and discuss how they can keep healthy and the importance of physical activity and a balanced diet.

During lessons and activities, nearly all pupils take on teachers' suggestions, and make appropriate improvements to their work. A majority make suitable changes to their work following written feedback from teachers. However, they do not always do this well enough. As a result, in a few cases they miss opportunities to understand how and where they may have made errors in their work.

Teaching and learning experiences

There are very strong, positive working relationships between staff and pupils. They show mutual respect and courtesy towards one another. Adults know pupils well and use a range of well understood strategies to help pupils manage their behaviour and emotions. For example, they create safe spaces in classrooms where pupils can take the time to regulate how they are feeling. Adults model positive language, which pupils then adopt when talking to each other.

In a majority of lessons teachers set a good pace for learning, balance their input and pupil activity appropriately, ask well-framed questions to enable pupils to clarify and extend their thinking and challenge and support pupils at the correct level. In these lessons, teachers plan activities that encourage pupils to explore, investigate and use their creative skills. However, these features of good teaching, which enable pupils to learn best, are not consistently applied across the school. Additionally, where teaching is less successful, although providing activities and resources that link to the class theme, teachers are not always clear what they want their pupils to learn. This means that pupils use their time on activities that do not always help them to extend their knowledge and understanding or apply their skills at an appropriate level. This is particularly the case for many pupils in the nursery and reception classes.

In a majority of lessons teachers give verbal and written feedback that helps pupils to understand how to improve their work. However, the school's agreed approach is not

applied consistently, and this means that on occasion pupils continue to repeat the same mistakes or reinforce the same misconceptions.

Many teachers use a range of assessment data well to group pupils, for example when grouping them to support the development of their early phonetic and reading skills. A few teachers use the information in the school's new assessment tracking system beneficially to inform their planning for individuals and groups of pupils. But overall, this is at an early stage of development.

The school is beginning to develop a shared vision for its curriculum with well-being at its centre. Staff have engaged well with professional learning and worked effectively with local schools to begin to develop a purposeful, broad and balanced curriculum. However, the school's curriculum does not ensure the coherent and progressive development of pupils' skills and knowledge as they progress through the school. As a result, they do not always build effectively on their previous learning. In addition, there is not an overall plan for the delivery of Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), which are statutory elements of the curriculum. The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wales. However, the school does not plan well for the structured development of pupils' Welsh language skills.

The school provides a suitable range of interesting themes that support many aspects of pupils' development appropriately, such as their health and well-being, and their awareness of diversity and equality. These themes, together with a number of published resources, form a sound basis for planned learning. Teachers work with pupils to devise an appropriate range of topics and learning activities that engage the interest of many pupils. For example, at the beginning of themes, pupils suggest interesting activities that they would like to undertake. This has a positive effect on pupils' enthusiasm for their learning and how well they apply themselves to tasks.

The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of educational and residential visits that reinforce learning appropriately. For example, pupils in Year 6 visit the Urdd residential centre at Llangrannog and this has a positive effect upon their resilience and ability to cooperate with their peers. Teachers regularly incorporate visits from external organisations and other individuals to enhance pupils' learning. For instance, staff used a recent visit from Action for Children to develop an interesting range of learning activities that encouraged pupils to discuss and express their emotions. The curriculum ensures that pupils have regular opportunities to learn about how to lead healthy and active lifestyles.

Teachers provide rich opportunities for pupils to develop their oral skills, read a range of texts and write in a variety of genres. They use a wide range of strategies and resources to develop pupils' mathematical skills and ensure good opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills to support their learning. For example, nearly all pupils independently access digital platforms to complete learning activities. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills, such as the ability to use spreadsheets and databases.

The foundation learning curriculum provides beneficial opportunities for pupils from nursery to Year 2 to learn outdoors. For example, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 develop their creative skills whilst exploring with 'loose parts'.

Care, support and guidance

Tongwynlais Primary is a warm, welcoming and highly caring school. Staff know their pupils very well and strong working relationships between staff and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, are evident across the school. The school has effective relationships with parents that support the learning and well-being of pupils well. Most parents feel that the school enables their children to be happy and safe and believe that the school supports their needs successfully.

Leaders and staff work collaboratively to promote an ethos of inclusion and support. This assists pupils' social, health and emotional needs effectively and includes a comprehensive range of well-being initiatives and individual medical care. Staff apply behaviour intervention strategies consistently, resulting in most pupils being able to regulate their emotions successfully when they find situations challenging. Staff have developed effective systems for pupils to receive emotional support and most pupils are confident to access this when needed.

The school has robust systems to identify and track pupils with specific learning needs. The ALN co-ordinator, teachers and other specialist support staff use data and evaluations purposefully to provide bespoke support for pupils who have ALN. Staff collaborate well with external agencies, such as local authority specialist teachers, education psychologists and charities, to support pupils with specific needs. Teachers create well-written and purposeful individual development plans that clearly outline the support pupils will receive and how progress will be measured. They develop useful one-page profiles that outline pupils' interests and how they like to be supported to learn. These measures help to ensure that most pupils make sound progress towards their individual targets.

Teachers' use of 'pupil planning boards' helps to ensure that pupils have a strong voice in their learning. There are several pupil voice groups that make appropriate contributions to school life. For instance, the Tongwynlais Eco Council are responsible for recycling and monitoring energy usage in school, and the Super Ambassadors have worked with leaders to plan ways to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils and families.

Staff provide pupils with many opportunities to exercise during the school day and to engage in a range of after school clubs such as cricket and rounders, PE club and football. Pupils value and enjoy these activities.

Regular acts of worship and links with local Church groups support pupils' spiritual development appropriately. The school has strong links with a church community in the United States and its members have visited to deliver assemblies and lessons which pupils found engaging and interesting. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to reflect on important values and issues, such as the climate crisis, healthy relationships and human rights. This supports pupils to reflect on a range of ethical and moral issues successfully.

The school is developing good links with various community groups, such as the local care home and library. Teachers encourage pupils to be proactive in the community, for instance by providing opportunities for them to write to the council to suggest potential initiatives to enhance the community.

The school provides a wide range of experiences to help pupils develop an appreciation of their identity and heritage and increase their understanding of the diversity of their local community, Wales, and the wider world. Through research projects, staff effectively increase pupils' awareness and understanding of issues relating to diversity and equality, such as the history and experiences of influential black and ethnic minority people, such as Stevie Wonder, Mary Secole, Simone Biles and Martin Luther King.

Staff at the school know their pupils and families well. They ensure appropriate arrangements to support pupils to learn how to stay safe online. Pupils feel safe and secure, and the school ensures that there are effective procedures in place to address any reported incidents of bullying. Overall, the school's arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is very new to post having previously been the executive deputy headteacher across the federation. He maintains positive working relationships with staff and parents and is successfully gaining their confidence in his new role. Staff in particular feel valued and believe that leaders take their well-being seriously. The headteacher models reflective and thoughtful leadership and has a clear vision for the federation based around joint working, supporting pupil well-being and using strengths across the federation to improve the quality of teaching and learning. For example, staff in Tongwynlais have begun to share their positive approach towards developing pupils' thinking skills with colleagues in Coryton.

Leaders pay close attention to the impact of poverty on pupils' progress and learning experiences. For example, they have established reading and uniform sheds for the exchange of books and school clothes. They also work to support families in need through the distribution of food packs and have recently begun to distribute foodbank vouchers.

Leaders have appropriate expectations of staff and the quality of their work. They encourage staff to reflect on their practice and to take responsibility for their own practice. However, the quality of teaching is not consistent across the federation or within each school.

Leaders ensure that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. However, the current distribution of roles and responsibilities is not effective; too many important and time-consuming roles lie with the headteacher in addition to his overall strategic role. For example, he oversees the federation's support for pupils with ALN, its curriculum and its assessment procedures. These arrangements are not sustainable or effective.

Leaders work appropriately with governors to oversee the allocation of each school's budget, grant spending and other resources. However, the budgets for both schools

are forecast to be in significant deficit at the end of the current financial year and there is not an agreed plan in place to remedy this situation. The pupil development grant is allocated appropriately to support targeted pupils.

Leaders have a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the federation. For example, they recognise the need to ensure the more effective distribution of leadership across the federation and the need to develop further its approach to planning for progression in line with the requirements of Curriculum for Wales. They are beginning show the capacity to implement improvement strategies effectively in a few key areas. For example, recent work to improve the quality of the teaching of reading and the development of the use of guided group reading has begun to impact positively on the skills of pupils.

Leaders have put in place a comprehensive timetable of monitoring, evaluation and review that runs across the federation and involves a range of senior and middle leaders. Monitoring activities are well embedded and cover a good range of the work of the school. For example, senior and middle leaders look at pupil work across the federation, observe lessons, speak to pupils about their learning experiences and survey the views of parents. However, these activities do not focus closely enough on the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Leaders involve a suitable range of stakeholders in their self-evaluation and improvement processes, such as teachers, pupils and parents. Teachers work across the federation well to consider standards and identify areas for improvement. However, the school recognises the need to engage a wider range of staff and more fully engage other partners, such as parents, in these processes.

Leaders are developing a positive culture of professional learning that builds upon the strengths within the federation to help address areas that need further development. Increasingly, leaders use the particular strengths of staff to improve provision. In many cases, professional learning is successful in improving the professional practice of staff and ensuring better outcomes for pupils. Staff at both schools engage in a purposeful range of professional learning that link well to the school's improvement priorities. However, the impact of professional learning is not consistent across the federation and self-evaluation processes do not always sufficiently identify inconsistencies in how staff apply new approaches.

Tongwynlais Primary School is part of the Cardiff Metropolitan University education partnership and is a lead school for initial teacher training. This means that the school's staff are responsible for providing professional learning for around 30 students and teaching practice for 8 to 11 students, each year.

Governors are supportive of the work of the federation and have an appropriate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. They appreciate the potential benefits of federation working and are keen to maximise these benefits whilst maintaining the unique characteristics of each school.

Governors support the development of a culture of safeguarding across the federation effectively. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including when dealing with complaints and issues raised by parents.

They ensure that pupils develop an appropriate understanding of the importance of healthy eating and drinking.

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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