



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

A report on

Coed-Y-Brain Primary School

**School Street
Llanbradach
CF83 3LD**

Date of inspection: July 2023

by

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

About Coed-Y-Brain Primary School

Name of provider	Coed-Y-Brain Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	204
Pupils of statutory school age	173
Number in nursery classes	16
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%)	25.4%
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%)	25.4%
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	05/09/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	12/01/2015
Start date of inspection	03/07/2023

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

Leaders and staff at Coed-y-Brain Primary School work with dedication to create a positive and caring learning community. The pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are encouraged to be proud of themselves and celebrate who they are. This develops a strong mutual respect between all pupils and staff. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they can speak to staff if they are concerned or worried.

During their time in school, most pupils make good progress including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those who attend the specialist resource base (SRB). All staff support them successfully to develop positive attitudes to learning and, as a result, pupils' collaboration in class activities and around the school is a notable feature. Pupils' oracy skills across the school are a strength. Most pupils make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and use them confidently in other areas of learning. Pupils' progress in developing their Welsh oracy skills is appropriate but they do not develop their digital skills well enough as they move through the school.

The whole-school approach to plan and deliver the Curriculum for Wales is successful. Staff provide pupils with interesting opportunities to build on their knowledge and understanding. Teachers plan interesting lessons to engage nearly all pupils. However, teaching on the whole, is over directed and there are limited opportunities for pupils to become independent learners. In addition, opportunities to develop the curiosity and creativity of many of the younger pupils in the outdoor environment are underdeveloped.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They show respect to their friends and staff. There is a strong culture of inclusion across the school, where pupils are given equal opportunity to be involved in all aspects of school life.

There is a strong sense of teamwork at the school, and the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and Governors work together positively. Leaders have placed well-being at the heart of the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' digital skills
- R2 Develop pupils' independent skills
- R3 Develop the outdoor provision for pupils under seven years old

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils start school with skills and understanding below those expected for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those who are eligible for free school meals, make good progress from their starting points. Many pupils in the specialist resource base achieve well in line with their needs and abilities.

As the pupils move through the school, most make strong progress in developing their speaking, listening and communication skills. Many pupils listen well and pay close attention to what their peers and staff have to say. They ask thoughtful questions, develop ideas, and make valuable contributions that consider other pupils' views. Many pupils express themselves well by Year 2 and, as they progress through the school, they talk increasingly confidently about their work. By Year 6, most pupils are articulate and mature speakers. They express themselves well when for example, discussing the impact of the current economic climate and how it is affecting their own community.

Many pupils have positive attitudes to developing their Welsh language skills. They respond suitably when taking part in daily 'Helpwr Heddiw' sessions or when asked a simple question. Although most pupils are developing appropriate skills, progress overall is less well developed.

Across the school, most pupils make strong progress in developing their reading skills. From nursery to Year 2 many pupils show a sound understanding of their letters and sounds and are building confidence when constructing simple words and phrases independently. In Year 2, many pupils talk enthusiastically about the characters in stories and use early research skills effectively to produce a fact file about a polar bear. Most pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 read with fluency and demonstrate a secure understanding of the complex texts they read. They identify themes and justify their ideas about characters' actions confidently.

Many pupils' discrete writing skills are developing well as they move through the school. The youngest pupils in the nursery experiment with different mark-making methods and begin to form letters correctly. Many pupils in Years 1 show an awareness of the form of a sentence and punctuate with increasing accuracy. Many Years 2 pupils record their investigation about how different materials are suitable to make a boat using a suitable range of scientific vocabulary. Older pupils write well in a range of contexts. For example, Year 4 pupils produce interesting leaflets persuading people to visit Llanbradach and Year 6 write a detailed and engaging letter to a leading politician to reconsider her decision about the movement of refugees into the country. However, overall, pupils do not always extend their writing through a wide enough range of genres.

Most pupils make effective progress in developing a range of skills in their maths lessons. Pupils across the school have a good grasp of number work and use correct mathematical vocabulary when completing their calculations. The younger pupils in the nursery recognise numbers through a range of practical activities, for example

counting how many different coloured plants found in the forest. Through exploration, they order stones from the smallest to the largest. As the pupils move through the years, they recall and build on previous learning successfully. Pupils support each other well when tackling problems such as, for example, calculating the 'pros and cons' of being paid wages weekly, monthly, or annually. They use more formal calculation strategies accurately. Most pupils use their numeracy skills suitably in other subjects.

The progression of most pupils' digital skills is developing slowly. They research about life in the Amazon Forest, create short presentations about a country of their own choice and record and present their traffic survey suitably. Pupils from the nursery can use technology to support their learning and by Year 6 they are beginning to understand how to build a web site and add hyperlinks. However, the wider digital skills of many pupils are not developing well enough.

Most pupils' physical skills are developing well through a variety of purposeful activities. From nursery to Year 2, they develop their skills well through movement lessons and, for example using bikes during break times. Pupils continue to build on these skills successfully in regular planned lessons, after-school clubs and taking part competitively with other schools. Many pupils are beginning to develop their creative skills suitably.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Every morning pupils enter school with an eagerness and enthusiasm for learning. Within the safe and nurturing environment, the pupils thrive and develop into mature and caring individuals. Nearly all pupils feel safe at school. They are confident that they can turn to any member of staff to share a concern and know that they are listened to and get the support they need. Across the school, most pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

Pupils are courteous and polite to staff, visitors, and to one another. They greet visitors in a friendly manner and clearly feel at ease to share their personal well-being issues or the hurdles they must overcome in life. These positive attitudes and openness make people feel a part of their wider community immediately. Pupils' interaction with each other and all staff is a strength.

Most pupils' behaviour both within and outside the classroom is good. All pupils, including those from different groups, such as those with additional learning needs and eligible for free school meals, take on leadership roles and responsibilities confidently. Overall, the school's pupil voice groups are developing well. Pupils feel their views are valued and that they make worthwhile contributions to decisions and changes made in the school. For example, a successful campaign by the school council contributed towards establishing a community shop supporting the needs of all families in the locality. Through the work of the other groups, such as the digital leaders, pupils are beginning to demonstrate their leadership skills successfully by supporting the younger pupils to access their work on the class computers.

Most pupils demonstrate purposeful levels of self-motivation and engage well with nearly all tasks. They recall prior learning effectively at the beginning of lessons and show a high level of interest in their work. Nearly all pupils in the specialist resource

base show enthusiasm and interest in learning experiences when, for example, they become astronauts for the day.

Across the school, pupils show perseverance and determination well. They are resilient when faced with a problem or challenge. For example, when tackling a new mathematical concept using tenths and hundredths, Year 5 use self-help strategies successfully to succeed. Most pupils are comfortable working collaboratively and they listen to each other, taking other's opinions into consideration well. They contribute successfully to what they want to learn and are increasingly more confident in improving their own work. However, most pupils' independent learning skills are limited as they rely too much on staff to direct them in their learning.

Many pupils have a deep understanding of their rights and responsibilities as ethical and informed citizens. Through planned activities such as discussing the impact of fair trade on child labour and whole-school fund-raising activities, pupils develop an empathy towards others by supporting local and world-wide charities. The pupils are very proud of their involvement in assisting in the school's cabin which is providing their wider community with food, clothing, and essential goods. As a result, pupils' knowledge of current issues such as sustainable food production and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis is sound.

Most pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep healthy through eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise. The 'Cryw Cymraeg' promote the importance of eating healthily by selling fruit during break times, whilst promoting the Welsh language at the same time. Most pupils take every opportunity to improve their physical skills through numerous lessons, extra-curricular sports clubs, and competitions with other schools. At break times, many pupils choose to engage in physical activities led by their peers, which reinforces friendships outside their own classes successfully.

Many pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of after-school clubs. For example, they enjoy attending cooking, crochet, and choir clubs. These activities develop pupils' wider skills as well as contributing positively to their well-being.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, teacher and support staff, know their pupils well and develop strong, supportive relationships, creating a nurturing learning environment. The school's curriculum supports the development of pupils' social and emotional skills significantly and the strong focus on well-being, equality and the rights of the child has a significant impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour.

Leaders and staff have worked effectively with pupils, parents and governors to create a shared vision for their curriculum. As a result, the school has successfully developed a curriculum that reflects the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. Staff plan purposeful themes and work with the pupils to create learning activities to motivate and engage the interests of most pupils. They provide a range of interesting topics across the areas of learning and experience to stimulate and build on pupils' knowledge. Teachers use resources well to capture pupils' imagination. For example, as part of their topic 'let's travel', the teacher changed the colour of the Year 2

classroom door to replicate the one in the class reading book. Once through the door, the pupils explore a country of their choice effectively. Staff also provide opportunities for pupils to contribute to the successful planning of real-life learning experiences, such as collaborating to research and plan the cost of a trip to the Senedd in Cardiff Bay. These activities enhance the learning experience and have a positive impact on pupils' understanding of their local community, heritage and the culture in the wider community. Pupils contribute to the curriculum planning each term and, as a result, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and apply themselves well to their tasks.

The school's provision to improve oracy, reading and writing is strong, with pupils particularly demonstrating high levels of oracy skills. Although pupils are confident in using their literacy skills across the curriculum, they do not always produce extended written work in a wide enough range of forms. Teachers develop pupils' discreet maths skills well and provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply them authentically in other areas of learning. Provision for developing pupils' digital skills is underdeveloped and, as a result, pupils do not make sufficient progress in this area.

Where teaching is most effective, staff model the Welsh language well and roles such as 'Helpwr Heddiw' supports help to promote the language suitably. However, although most staff use simple Welsh phrases and give simple instructions daily, the provision to ensure that pupils make progress through the school is inconsistent.

Most teachers organise their classrooms well. They create an effective environment that create a positive ethos for learning. Teachers give clear explanations in lessons that enable pupils to undertake their work confidently and plan activities that build on previous learning purposefully. In class, pupils are encouraged to share their ideas and support each other through purposeful questioning. Teaching assistants support pupils competently. They contribute skilfully to the teaching and learning, using their expertise regularly to plan activities, for example to support pupils to make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers show a thorough understanding of subject knowledge and planned activities are matched well to pupils' abilities. Pupils are challenged suitably. However, overall, teachers tend to over-direct learning. The overuse of structured lessons and activities restricts most pupils in becoming independent learners.

In most classes, teachers provide pupils with purposeful opportunities to assess their own work, so that they know how well they are doing. In addition, they are beginning to use a range of assessment for learning strategies appropriately to measure pupils' understanding of a task. All teachers provide pupils with regular, suitable verbal feedback. Written comments, however, provide limited guidance for the pupils to move their learning forward.

Annual visits to two residential centres enable pupils to learn about teamwork while taking part in outdoor activities. Most teachers utilise the outdoor learning environment successfully for example, the forest school area and pond are used well to support pupils' engagement with nature. Staff plans to develop pupils' curiosity, creativity and independent skills are developing suitably in the nursery class. However, the use of the outdoor learning area for pupils in reception to Year 2 is underdeveloped.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and inclusive environment, which has a very positive impact on the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. Leaders prioritise and foster a shared approach to well-being, ensuring an atmosphere of respect between staff and pupils. This leads to pupils feeling safe and cared for within a trusting setting. All staff respond effectively to the pupils' needs and promptly address any emotional difficulties. They utilise a range of strategies, including using calm areas successfully to support pupils. As a result, the bespoke interventions have a beneficial effect on pupils' well-being and secure good and courteous behaviour across the school.

The provision for all pupils who have been identified with ALN is robust. The ALN co-ordinator and staff track and monitor pupil progress carefully and plan tailored programmes of support. As a result, teaching assistants deliver extensive literacy, numeracy and social and personal programmes in each class, which make positive and lasting change to pupils' well-being and their ability to learn. The school works closely with multi agencies to provide specific activities and support sessions for pupils' emotional, health and social needs, where appropriate. Staff include parents purposefully in discussions about their children's progress.

The school provides carefully adapted support for those pupils that attend the specialist resource base. The teacher and learning support assistants ensure a caring, welcoming environment in which pupils feel well supported and encouraged to achieve their learning and well-being objectives.

Whole-school acts of collective worship make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Staff provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on key values and how they might apply these to their daily lives. Through class lessons about farming and communities in developing countries, pupils consider the importance of fairness, diversity, and global issues effectively. The school plans a range of purposeful activities for pupils to explore their rights as children within the school. Teachers skilfully include pupils' own questions and ideas into whole-school discussions, such as the right for all children to have proper clothing, food, and a home. As a result, pupils across the school confidently distinguish between right and wrong. Opportunities to develop pupils' sense of their Welsh identity are developing appropriately through cultural events, such as the annual school Eisteddfod and by visiting local places of interest.

The school has a range of pupil voice groups, which are beginning to take on responsibility and make meaningful decisions about the school. Pupils organise activities, such as cake sales, to raise awareness of cancer. They are developing as active citizens and make valuable contributions to the locality, such as to keep it free from litter, and by ensuring that families have enough food for the week. These experiences help pupils to develop empathy and respect for their own area well.

The school provides a range of stimulating trips and visits that support the curriculum, such as the Year 5 weekend at the Urdd residential centre in Llangrannog and when pupils in Years 1 and 2 visit a local adventure park. These visits have a positive effect on most pupils' co-operation skills and resilience. In addition, several after-school clubs provide pupils with a range of valuable

opportunities to engage in sport and physical activity, such as running, netball and bowls. These enhance the pupils' physical development and enjoyment in an active lifestyle successfully. Teachers plan a good range of activities that develop pupils' understanding of how to be healthy.

There is a robust culture of safeguarding at the school. The school's procedures for monitoring attendance and pupils who arrive late are purposeful. Leaders contact parents promptly to discuss any concerns and use the local authority's attendance and welfare officer, when necessary. As a result of the school's focus and thorough procedures, attendance levels are beginning to improve.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, ably supported by staff, has communicated a clear vision for the school which focuses on the importance of the well-being of each pupil and sets high expectations of how they behave and relate to one another. Leaders place a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning to meet all pupils' needs.

All leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of the pupils and the community. They work passionately and with commitment to meet these needs and, as a result, the school is a vibrant learning community. At its core is a thoughtful and inclusive culture that ensures that all pupils feel a secure sense of belonging and develop the confidence and skills to engage positively with all learning experiences.

Leaders distribute staff roles and responsibilities creatively. They have established a positive culture and ethos that promotes and supports the professional learning of all staff and is often linked meaningfully to self-evaluation findings and improvement priorities. For example, the teaching assistants' training to improve vulnerable pupils' social skills, dealing with their emotions and raising their self-esteem, has impacted positively on many pupils' readiness to learn. The school works well with other providers, such as institutes that provide childcare and initial teacher education. This helps support the development of teachers and to develop their professional practice successfully.

The headteacher has a range of effective activities for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and, as a result, all staff have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Over time, the school has identified key areas for improvement, such as improving pupils' involvement in their own learning. In addition, leaders address national priorities well. Work to address the additional learning needs reform, tackling the impact of poverty and meeting the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales is successful. Leaders plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in formal and informal situations and implement these plans suitably. However, monitoring by staff occasionally fails to recognise an area for improvement, such as the need for consistency in the development of pupils' digital skills.

Members of the governing body know the school well and are highly supportive. They keep up to date with national developments and improvement priorities through meetings and detailed reports from the headteacher. In recent months they have re-assigned link governors to look at various aspects of the curriculum and priorities for improvement. Although these activities are still at initial stages, the governors hold

the school to account well, such as about the school's procedures for improving attendance and the impact of the nurture class on pupils' well-being and engagement in their learning. Governors fulfil their statutory obligations appropriately and take full account of relevant legislation and guidance. They ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances well. They allocate the pupil development grant effectively to provide additional support to improve pupils' basic skills and well-being. Most of the pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households who receive extra support make good progress. Leaders also ensure that all staff understand and promote the strong safeguarding culture in the school.

The school shares important information with parents in a timely way. Leaders work in partnership with parents and the wider school community to improve opportunities of all pupils. Parents are given opportunities to develop their capacity to support their own children by accompanying them in lessons. As a result, parents have a better understanding of the curriculum and methods to support their reading skills, for example.

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2023: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 05/09/2023