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

A report on

Troedyrhiw Primary School

Archer Street
Troedyrhiw
CF48 4JQ

Date of inspection: October 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh

About Troedyrhiw Primary School

Name of provider	Troedyrhiw Primary School
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	215
Pupils of statutory school age	159
Number in nursery classes	27
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%)	20.0%
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%)	17.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2015
Start date of inspection	02/10/2023

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

Troedyrhiw Primary School is a caring and supportive school that provides a haven for learning at the heart of the community. A sense of belonging and team spirit permeates the school ethos and encourages both staff and pupils to challenge themselves and embrace opportunities to further develop their teaching and learning.

School leaders ensure that pupils' well-being is paramount in any decisions they make. As a result, nearly all pupils thrive and are enthusiastic about their learning and opportunities to try new skills. Throughout the school, nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well. They listen attentively, follow instructions and work on tasks diligently. Nearly all pupils develop respectful relationships with staff and peers. They consider others' views and support one another well.

The very strong leadership team, supported by highly effective governors, addresses school priorities rigorously. Governors work with other schools to develop their understanding of self-evaluation, enabling them to provide invaluable support to school leaders to identify strengths and priorities for development accurately. Staff develop an excellent understanding of individual pupil needs and, as a result, support them effectively to reach their potential.

The school has created a broad and inclusive curriculum, with opportunities for pupils to immerse themselves in the rich history of the local area and Wales. The many opportunities for pupils to be immersed in Welsh language activities enable many pupils to develop as confident and enthusiastic Welsh speakers.

Nearly all teachers plan exciting opportunities for pupils to build on their literacy, numeracy and digital skills, both in class and when learning outdoors. Nearly all pupils make good progress as they move through the school and develop their problem-solving skills well. However, where teachers over-direct learning, especially for younger learners, they do not always develop sufficiently as independent, creative thinkers and learners.

Recommendations

R1   Provide opportunities for younger pupils to develop as independent and creative thinkers and learners

What happens next

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work, in relation to how governor improvement groups impact positively on governors' capacity to support senior leaders and how well staff assess learning to ensure all pupils make good progress, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start Nursery with skills in language and mathematical development below those expected for their age. The youngest pupils make rapid progress with their social skills, and they quickly settle into daily activities. Nearly all pupils make very good progress in all aspects of their learning. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make strong progress. By the end of Year 6, they often develop literacy and numeracy skills expected for their age. Most pupils who are eligible for free school meals make strong progress from their starting points and a few pupils exceed expectations.

Pupils in Nursery and Reception are at an early stage of development with their mathematical skills. Many count objects to 10 with accuracy and a few pupils use simple mathematical language when measuring the height of toy animals with cubes. As they move through the school, nearly all pupils make strong progress in their understanding of number. By the end of Year 2, many pupils count on in steps of 2, 5 and 10. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils work confidently with positive and negative numbers to find the difference in temperature between two countries.

Older pupils use their mathematical skills to solve problems independently. For example, Year 4 pupils measure accurately to create a map of animal enclosures for their zoo. A few pupils consider additional information to accommodate the requests of animals wanting enclosures double the size. Throughout the school, nearly all pupils apply these skills in other areas of learning well. In Year 2, pupils count in 10s to design a playground marking and, in Year 6, many pupils draw line graphs accurately to represent the number of people visiting the cinema throughout the decades.

Most pupils' speaking and listening skills develop quickly. As they move through the school, they gain confidence in answering questions and communicating with their peers and adults. Most older pupils speak clearly and confidently for a range of purposes, for example when presenting information and sharing their positive views about the school.

Throughout the school, pupils develop their reading skills very well. Most pupils are enthusiastic readers and talk about their favourite authors eagerly. Younger pupils quickly develop a good understanding of letter sounds and use picture cues to develop their early reading skills. In Year 2, most pupils read simple texts fluently and with expression. Many pupils in Year 4 quickly retrieve information by skimming and scanning texts during guided reading sessions. By Year 6, most pupils show a solid understanding of texts when answering complex questions, for example when thinking about the mood of a text from the vocabulary.

Nearly all pupils develop good writing skills as they move through the school. In Year 3, most pupils are beginning to understand the features of a range of genres, sentences are well constructed, and punctuation is generally accurate. Many older pupils write extensively and with maturity. For example, when writing stories in Year 6, most pupils structure their writing well, thinking carefully about its purpose and

audience. They consider their vocabulary choices and often make improvements to their writing in response to feedback.

Younger pupils show their understanding of the Welsh language by responding appropriately to simple commands and joining in with Welsh songs. They develop a range of simple vocabulary relevant to their learning, including colours and numbers. By Year 2, most pupils answer simple questions about themselves. Many older pupils build on their Welsh language skills confidently and enthusiastically.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate strong digital skills and build on these skills systematically as they move through the school. For example, when presenting data Nursery pupils create pictograms with support, Year 2 create simple bar charts and, by Year 5, they use spreadsheets successfully to present their budget for a World Cup football trip. Most pupils use technology skilfully to support their learning. For example, in Year 4, nearly all pupils use their excellent research and recording skills to plan and present a digital film about an animal of their choice.

Across the school, nearly all pupils develop strong creative skills. They express themselves through art, music and dance confidently. During the 'My Merthyr, My Home' topic, pupils use a range of medium to create mood and perspective when drawing portraits and landscapes. Pupils' physical skills are developing appropriately. Most younger pupils show good co-ordination and awareness of space, when climbing on apparatus in the outdoor area. Most older pupils throw and catch a ball skilfully in the after-school Netball Club, and they demonstrate cycle safety techniques with care, when using the bikes during playtime sessions.

When given the opportunity, many pupils work collaboratively to solve problems and think creatively about the methods they will use and how they will present their work. However, younger pupils do not explore their environment or develop their problem-solving and creative skills often enough.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils develop positive working relationships with the staff and with their peers. They have a clear understanding of the school's expectations of behaviour. As a result, nearly all pupils are courteous and friendly to staff and visitors. Pupils feel safe at school and know who to turn to if they need help. They value and appreciate the staff and the roles they play in their lives.

Nearly all pupils enjoy learning and are often highly engaged in lessons. They are proud of their achievements and share their learning experiences enthusiastically. Nearly all pupils listen well and follow instructions successfully in lessons and when moving around the school. Most pupils recall useful information and build on the skills they learn. For example, pupils in Year 2 create images in the style of Romero Britto, using natural materials. As they move through the school, most pupils grow as independent learners, they readily seek the resources they need to complete tasks and find solutions to problems before seeking support. However, younger pupils' learning is often over-directed, and pupils have too few opportunities to explore and make mistakes to deepen their learning.

Pupils value the feedback they receive from teachers during lessons. Most older pupils self-assess their work skilfully. They use success criteria to effectively evaluate their achievements and areas for development. For example, most pupils in Year 6 select suitable vocabulary to create suspense and awe when rewriting a paragraph for their stories.

Most pupils are ethically aware and enjoy opportunities to help others in need through charity work and donating to the local food bank for Harvest. Many pupils are developing a good understanding of treating others fairly. For example, during playtimes, pupils actively include others who may be alone, and a few pupils support them to resolve disagreements effectively. Pupils in leadership roles create clear action plans linked to their roles and know that their contributions to decision-making and actioning change are valued by school leaders. For example, the Criw Cymraeg are proud of their impact on the use of Welsh language in the playground.

Pupils learn how to be healthy and make healthy choices. They understand how diet, physical activity and mental health impact on their quality of life. Nearly all pupils enjoy opportunities to be active during break times and during lessons through bike riding, skipping and playing ball games. Many older pupils appreciate the support the school gives them to maintain well-being, relationships, and personal development.

Teaching and learning experiences

School leaders have worked effectively with staff, pupils and governors to develop a shared vision for their curriculum to promote opportunities for pupils to be self-motivated and ambitious learners. The resulting curriculum engages all learners successfully and provides effective challenge and support. In most lessons, pupils are encouraged to be actively involved and take responsibility for their learning journey.

Staff have developed a range of engaging, inquiry-based topics, that capture pupils' interests. Nearly all teachers engage pupils with an exciting experience at the beginning of each topic as a hook for their learning. For example, older pupils taste different foods as part of their topic Arabian Nights. Staff and volunteers enrich the curriculum effectively through planned activities and innovative sessions that challenge pupils to learn and apply new skills successfully. For example, pupils work with a photographer to develop their photography and creative skills.

Most teachers provide extensive opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate their literacy, numeracy and digital skills through real life and imaginative contexts. For example, during the whole-school finance week, teachers plan for pupils to develop their understanding of money when organising a weekly budget and creating spreadsheets to track household expenditure. Pupils in Year 4 practise measuring with accuracy and find the difference between an estimate and the actual measurement, as part of a problem-solving activity to build a bridge with sticks in the park.

Teachers plan authentic experiences to celebrate the rich history of the local area. For example, they visit Cyfarthfa Castle to deepen their appreciation and connections with their locality. Whole-school projects on Wales provide opportunities for pupils and the wider community to work together, developing an understanding of the

culture and language of Wales beyond the classroom. Teachers empower 'The Criw Cymraeg' to actively promote a strong Welsh ethos and plan whole-school experiences for all pupils to develop a sense of pride in their Welsh heritage. Staff are beginning to promote the Welsh language in class and around the school successfully. In the best cases, most teachers have a positive impact on pupils' confidence to speak Welsh.

Nearly all teachers plan a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn the importance of keeping fit and making healthy food choices. Teachers support learners to understand the importance of keeping themselves safe when using online devices. For example, older pupils use their knowledge to create a guide on using digital devices and social media safely for younger pupils.

Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the curriculum and provide clear explanations to help pupils understand the learning intention. In most cases, they model good approaches to learning and provide useful resources to support pupils. Overall, there is a good pace to learning and, as a result, pupils engage well and enjoy their activities. Nearly all teachers revisit prior learning to focus pupils' thinking and use questioning effectively to challenge pupils and check for understanding.

Staff across the school develop strong working relationships with pupils. They show care, humour and kindness. As a result, almost all pupils feel comfortable when asking for support. Staff have high expectations for all pupils' behaviour and create a learning environment, which encourages pupils' readiness to learn. Support staff have a good understanding of individual pupils' needs and respond appropriately. Most teachers encourage pupils to explore and develop their problem-solving and creativity skills well. However, younger pupils have limited opportunities to explore their environment and develop their problem-solving and creative skills independently.

Teachers use highly effective assessments to develop a good understanding of individual pupils' progress in lessons and over time. Teachers discuss the outcomes of these assessments and plan accordingly to ensure that nearly all pupils make better than expected progress across all areas of learning. Teachers assess writing diligently at the beginning of a new genre, which enables older pupils to understand how well they have achieved the writing style and their next steps in learning. Teachers reflect thoughtfully on what pupils can do and use this information to plan future lessons and identify pupils in need of support quickly.

Care, support and guidance

Troedyrhiw Primary School is a highly inclusive community. Staff build strong relationships with pupils, parents, and carers. They provide valuable access to targeted support for pupils, in addition to advice, support and guidance for parents and carers when needed. All staff respond thoughtfully to pupils' emotional needs, enabling them to develop a sense of belonging and resilience. The school's inclusive ethos enables pupils to settle well into school and contributes greatly to their well-being.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN is a strength. Staff work collaboratively to identify pupils who need additional support through rigorous assessment and

monitoring of pupil progress. Staff are highly effective in identifying gaps in pupils' learning and any gaps are addressed through the delivery of purposeful and targeted interventions. Senior leaders regularly evaluate the impact of interventions, to ensure that they remain purposeful and meet the needs of learners. This strong practice ensures that nearly all pupils with additional needs make excellent progress during their time in school. The school's innovative approach to providing valuable counselling for emotional and well-being support for pupils provides a safe space for pupils to share their worries with an adult if needed.

Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on values, and the beliefs of others. They plan thoughtful opportunities for pupils to learn about different countries and cultures. Older pupils benefit from opportunities to share their own cultures and traditions. The school promotes diversity and inclusion well, celebrating through artwork and its vibrant environment. All pupils, including those affected by socio-economic disadvantage, benefit from trips and visitors to the school, which deepens pupils' understanding of the wider world successfully.

Staff plan exciting transition activities to help pupils settle quickly as they move through the school. For example, in Year 2 pupils eat their lunch with the older pupils to familiarise themselves with unfamiliar areas of the school. During the summer term, all pupils spend time in their new class. Teachers liaise closely with the local secondary school to ensure a smooth transition for older pupils.

Teachers develop pupils' spiritual and moral understanding well. They promote values such as respect, empathy and compassion and give pupils valuable opportunities to learn and reflect on their own values and rights.

Staff provide a range of additional opportunities for pupils to practise skills and develop teamwork. For example, in the after-school sports club for younger pupils, most pupils take turns and develop their co-ordination skills well. Throughout their time in school, pupils have many opportunities to develop their self-confidence and express themselves creatively.

The school has robust systems in place to safeguard pupils. All staff have a good understanding of the processes in place. The whole-school approach to anti-bullying provides staff, pupils and parents with a good understanding of how to deal with any incidents. The school monitors pupils' attendance robustly. School leaders communicate the importance of good attendance to parents regularly, which has helped improve attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is a highly successful leader who brings about strong improvement. She is passionate about raising pupils' aspirations, ensuring that they have the skills and learning behaviours to give them choices in their adult lives. At the heart of the school's ethos is a commitment to improving pupils' sense of their own self-worth and their ability to be responsible and respectful individuals who achieve highly. The school's well-being strategy has had an outstanding impact on pupils' engagement with, and enjoyment of, learning.

The headteacher has high expectations of her able leadership team and of all staff. Leaders model and promote professional values and behaviours successfully, nurturing an effective and engaged team of practitioners. Together, they create a strong sense of community focused sharply on developing skilful and knowledgeable pupils in a safe and stimulating environment. Developing the leadership skills of all staff has been a priority for the school and, as a result, leadership at all levels is strong. Leaders carefully plan to ensure the stability and continuity of the school's work, such as provision for pupils with ALN and supporting staff with their career aspirations.

Leaders successfully balance the development of national and local priorities, including developing the school's curriculum to align with Curriculum for Wales, and developing a community-focused school approach. They consider possible new developments carefully and make judicious decisions about the direction the school will take. The headteacher has been the driving force behind curriculum development and there is a very clear rationale for the school's holistic approach to curriculum design. This has been effectively co-constructed with the whole school community, including pupils, parents and governors.

The governing body is highly effective. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities conscientiously to ensure that there is a robust culture of safeguarding and appropriate arrangements for pupils' healthy eating and drinking. Governors have a deep understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They monitor the school's progress against its improvement priorities regularly, drawing effectively on headteacher reports and their own first-hand evidence of learning and teaching.

To support governors in their work as critical friends, the headteacher has developed a cluster 'governor improvement group'. This has had an outstanding impact on Troedyrhiw governors' abilities to support and challenge leaders in pupils' best interests.

Leaders and governors prioritise spending to ensure that pupils' most pressing needs are met. They ensure that staff are effectively deployed, for example to address families' needs following the pandemic. The school finds innovative solutions to ensure that it sustains effective provision, for example through effective use of grant funding such as the pupil development grant, and highly effective professional development. Leaders and governors monitor the impact of spending closely and accurately evaluate the impact it has on improving pupils' learning and well-being. As a result, nearly all pupils affected by socio-economic disadvantage, who receive extra support make very good progress.

The school places considerable importance on equity and inclusion. It fosters strong relationships with parents, families and the community, and works closely with them to understand the socio-economic and health challenges. The deputy headteacher uses this information to develop effective approaches to reducing the impact of socio-economic disadvantage, supporting the community and improving parental engagement in the life and work of the school. Parents appreciate the communication they receive from the school and feel valued as partners in their children's education.

Leaders involve all staff, governors, parents and pupils in a range of effective monitoring activities that focus clearly on pupil progress and well-being. The school makes exceptionally good use of a wide range of evidence to identify improvement priorities. Although leaders generally evaluate the quality of teaching and assessment accurately, they do not identify improvements needed to improve the quality of provision for the youngest pupils.

The school's supportive professional learning culture leads to improvements in important areas of pupils' learning, such as oracy, reading, writing and mathematics. Increasingly, staff explore and apply research-based approaches to their practice in 'triads' and a reflective and collaborative culture of learning exists.

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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