



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

A report on
Tylorstown Primary School

**Edmund Street
Tylorstown
Ferndale Rhondda
RCT
CF43 3HH**

Date of inspection: December 2023

by

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

About Tylorstown Primary School

Name of provider	Tylorstown Primary School
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	127
Pupils of statutory school age	109
Number in nursery classes	18
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 23.7%)	40.8%
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 13.2%)	7.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*0
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*0
Date of headteacher appointment	03/04/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	11/05/2015
Start date of inspection	04/12/2023

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 headteacher at Tylorstown Primary School has developed an inclusive culture and pupils interact well with adults and each other. This culture of inclusivity helps pupils to build confidence and develop their self-esteem, whilst also respecting the views and feelings of others. Pupils are courteous and polite, and nearly all pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is excellent. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own well-being and behaviour and this contributes effectively to their approach to school life.

The youngest pupils begin to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well. However, as they move through the school, the progress they make is inconsistent. This means that too many pupils do not develop their skills well enough or make enough progress from their starting points. This has a negative impact on their work in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress from their individual starting points.

Although the school is beginning to develop its curriculum to reflect the principles of Curriculum for Wales appropriately, progress is slow. Teachers use an increasing range of visits and visitors to enhance pupils' experiences and pupils respond positively to these. However, the school's curriculum does not offer opportunities for pupils to develop and use their skills in a cohesive and progressive manner.

The quality of teaching across the school is variable. Often, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and the pace of learning is too slow. Teachers regularly structure activities too tightly and guide pupils' learning too much. This hampers pupils' capacity to become resilient, independent learners who can work things out for themselves. Teachers' feedback to pupils does not always help them to understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Over time, leaders have not monitored the school's work robustly enough. This means that they have not identified major shortcomings in the school's work or put in place actions to address them. Self-evaluation and improvement activities, as well as professional learning opportunities for staff, do not focus sufficiently well on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Members of the school's governing body are keen and enthusiastic but, they have been unable to provide effective support and challenge to the school due to an over-reliance of information from leaders about the quality of the school's work.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop leadership at all levels so that leaders have the necessary skills to bring about improvement
- R2 Ensure that evaluation processes focus on identifying the difference that teaching and learning experiences make to pupils' progress
- R3 Improve teaching and assessment

- R4 Improve pupils' learning experiences by developing a curriculum that meets their needs and enables them to develop their skills progressively

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

Main evaluation

Learning

When they first join the school, many pupils have skills, knowledge and understanding that are at or below those expected for their age. The youngest pupils settle well to learning and make good progress in developing their skills. They sustain this progress in most aspects of learning until the end of Year 1. Most pupils with ALN make good progress in achieving their individual targets. There is no notable difference in the progress of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and their peers. Overall, pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 make slow progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Across the school, most pupils make good progress in acquiring their communication skills. Most of the youngest pupils develop their listening and speaking skills well and develop quickly from low starting points. They develop confidence to participate in discussions with adults and begin to ask suitable questions independently. By Year 2, most pupils speak clearly, and many express their views with assurance. As they move through the school, older pupils offer opinions thoughtfully and respond appropriately and respectfully to others' ideas, when given the opportunity.

The majority of pupils across the school make suitable progress in reading. In the younger classes, many pupils sound out letters well and the majority use their understanding of letters and sounds to read short, simple words, such as 'bed' and 'milk'. By Year 3, the majority of pupils read simple texts accurately with varying success. However, few read with fluency. Overall, pupils do not develop suitable strategies to help them read with understanding. As they progress through school, the majority of pupils begin to read more confidently and with growing expression. However, most pupils do not develop their high order reading skills well enough. For example, most pupils do not use skimming and scanning skills to retrieve information successfully from a text.

Across the school, a majority of pupils develop suitable mathematical and numeracy skills. By Year 2, the majority of pupils use physical resources well to count and add numbers. They are confident using number bonds to 10, doubling and halving to 20 and using different coins up to £2. Many identify 2 dimensional shapes correctly and have a basic understanding of symmetry. From Year 3 to Year 6, a majority of pupils

make suitable progress in developing their number skills. More able pupils use a range of approaches to perform calculations, such as using multiplication grids and column addition. However, pupils do not develop their skills systematically and do not make the progress they are capable of as they move through the school. They often revisit previously learned concepts needlessly. Overall, pupils do not apply and understand how to use their numeracy skills purposefully in a wide enough range of situations. They have too few opportunities to develop these skills across the curriculum.

Many pupils develop a range of basic digital skills as they progress through the school. A majority of the youngest pupils use digital devices appropriately, for instance to record learning during lessons. By Year 2, many pupils use an appropriate range of apps, for instance to create simple graphs to record the class's favourite places. Older pupils use their digital skills suitably to undertake research and to create presentations. However, pupils do not have a strong enough understanding of a wide enough range of skills, such as data handling and spreadsheets.

Many pupils use a suitable range of Welsh words and phrases. Younger pupils use Welsh greetings and ask a few simple questions confidently. For example, they ask adults who they are and how they are feeling. By Year 2, many pupils use a limited range of sentences, for instance when responding to questions about the weather. By Year 6, many pupils have suitable Welsh language skills. They understand and respond to questions and commands from adults accurately. They ask others a suitable range of questions, for example about their families, and give clear answers to questions they have been asked.

Younger pupils develop their creative skills suitably. They experiment using a range of media, for example using glitter, sequins and paint to design crowns. Older pupils continue to develop their creative skills appropriately when opportunities arise. The quality of singing across the school is good and pupils develop performance and drama skills through whole school performances.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Across the school, the behaviour of nearly all pupils is excellent. Pupils are extremely polite and treat each other, adults and visitors with courtesy and respect. They are proud of their school and nearly all feel happy and safe. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and they respond sensitively to their emotional and social needs. Pupils know whom to approach if anything is worrying them and are confident that adults will listen to them. For example, across the school, the check in system at the start of the day helps pupils settle if they are feeling vulnerable or anxious. They benefit well from the support they receive.

Across the school, most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and enthusiasm in their learning, even when the work is not suitably matched to their needs. Nearly all pupils listen carefully to teachers' instructions and concentrate well during lessons. They collaborate successfully in pairs and groups, and many make positive contributions to class discussions. In a few instances, pupils persevere with the tasks they are set. For example, Reception and Year 1 pupils design and build a bridge for the Billy Goats Gruff to cross. Pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 generally

remain on task during lessons. However, too frequently they are not challenged or stimulated by their learning experiences, and do not develop well as independent learners.

Pupils have opportunities to join the School Council and Eco Council. They create action plans and meet regularly. However, they do not share information with younger pupils and have a limited impact on the life of the school. There are very few opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas or make decisions about their learning.

Pupils develop their physical skills well and all classes benefit from additional opportunities to refine their skills, for example when improving their ball skills during sessions with coaches from the local football team. Pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of a healthy diet and younger pupils understand what constitutes a healthy lunchbox.

When they receive verbal feedback, younger pupils respond well and answer questions successfully. Although many older pupils occasionally use success criteria to reflect on their next steps in learning they do not develop a suitable understanding of how to purposefully evaluate their own work or the work of their peers. As a result, they are often unsure what they need to do to improve their work. This is because teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities to develop these skills in pupils.

Pupils in the youngest classes learn about diversity through play using a wide range of multi-cultural resources, for example jigsaw puzzles, small world figures and books, which represent different groups and celebrate differences. There are fewer opportunities to support older pupils' understanding of diversity in their local community and the wider world. The majority of pupils develop their awareness of fairness, equality, sustainability, and children's rights. For example, the school undertakes fund raising activities and raises money for Children in Need annually. Older pupils provide Christmas boxes for elderly members of their community, in partnership with Cardiff City. A majority of pupils develop their understanding of the purpose of school rules, and understand how laws are created and applied to wider society.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is at a very early stage in developing a curriculum to align with the principles of Curriculum for Wales.

Teachers plan learning through projects and topics. Younger pupils enjoy activities such as building castles and writing invitations to a ball as part of their fairy tales project. However, across the school, teachers do not plan sequences of lessons that help pupils to progressively build their skills, knowledge and understanding effectively. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop and improve their literacy, numeracy and digital skills in their work across the curriculum.

In a few classes, pupils have opportunities to influence what they learn during whole-class planning sessions. However, pupils do not have a strong enough influence on the developing curriculum and, as a result, the topics do not always interest or engage them suitably.

The school's curriculum is enhanced through a suitable range of visits and visitors. For example, a local storyteller helped pupils improve their storytelling skills through a series of workshops. Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wales. For example, older pupils visit Rhondda Heritage Park and the Museum of Welsh Life to explore the history of their local area and of Wales. All pupils take part in the school's Eisteddfod and develop their Welsh language skills appropriately during short daily Welsh sessions.

Across the school, staff develop positive working relationships with pupils. They use praise well to develop pupils' confidence and this creates an atmosphere where pupils are confident to ask questions when they need help and support.

In a few lessons, where teaching is effective, teachers help pupils link the lesson to previous learning. In the younger classes, staff understand well how children develop and use this knowledge when teaching pupils number and writing skills. For example, they help pupils to form letters correctly through teaching their pens to 'dance' on the paper. They use support staff effectively, for instance to help groups of pupils and to ask probing questions to promote learning.

In a majority of lessons, teachers are not clear about what pupils need to learn and too often activities fill pupils' time without developing their knowledge or skills well enough. In the older classes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils and do not challenge them well enough. Often, the pace of lessons is slow, and teachers rely too heavily on worksheets and pre-prepared presentations, which lack context or authenticity. Pupils have limited opportunities to influence what and how they learn, and activities do little to motivate pupils or move them on in their learning.

In the younger classes, pupils generally receive helpful verbal feedback on their work. This helps them to engage positively with their learning. However, across the school, teachers do not provide useful feedback consistently well. They do not always evaluate pupils' work effectively. Teachers' written feedback for older pupils does not help them to know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve their work. In a few cases, teachers are beginning to help pupils understand what they can do to be successful by sharing success criteria for tasks. However, these helpful practices are not embedded well enough across the school.

Care, support and guidance

Across the school, staff develop positive and respectful working relationships with pupils and promote the importance of good behaviour well. This ensures that, throughout the school, pupils show care, empathy and compassion to each other and to staff and visitors.

The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to focus on important values such as kindness and empathy. Collective worship provides purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual and moral understanding and visitors from the local church enhance these opportunities. They encourage pupils to consider their responsibility to each other and the wider community.

The school ensures that the health and well-being of pupils is a priority. Outside agencies provide opportunities for older pupils to develop their physical skills and this is further enhanced by an after-school football session. Staff help pupils understand how to look after themselves and there are effective arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The school's support for pupils with ALN is strong. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) uses information effectively to identify and plan provision to address the needs of individual pupils. She liaises closely with outside agencies where appropriate to plan and support interventions to accelerate pupils' progress. This helps to ensure that most pupils with ALN make good progress. Staff deliver effective support to pupils with ALN during targeted well-being interventions and most pupils make good progress during these sessions. However, too often staff over-direct pupils, including pupils with ALN, during lessons. This prevents them from becoming independent learners, developing important skills such as resilience, perseverance and organisation. A minority of teachers in the older classes do not deploy teaching assistants successfully. As a result, learning experiences do not meet pupils' needs well enough to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.

The school provides a range of experiences to help pupils to develop an appreciation and understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. Opportunities to explore the local area and visits to nearby places of interest occasionally inspire pupils but are not part of a coherent curriculum that develops over time.

The school makes beneficial use of local visitors to enrich pupils' experiences. For example, every class benefits from weekly singing sessions.

The school provides adequate opportunities for pupils to influence aspects of the school's life and work. For example, pupils from the older classes lead the School Council and Eco group. However, this work is in the early stages of development. Pupils are beginning to understand environmental change and the part that they play in this. For example, The Eco-Council understands the harm that single use plastic has on the environment.

The headteacher has worked successfully to ensure that the school's safeguarding procedures are robust and that all pupils are safe within the school environment. Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to understand how to stay safe online.

The school has sound processes in place to monitor attendance. Staff support the families of pupils whose attendance needs to improve effectively.

Leadership and management

The headteacher ensures that Tylorstown Primary School provides a caring and inclusive environment where pupils feel respected and safe. She makes sure that the well-being of pupils and staff is a priority and sets high expectations of pupil behaviour.

Senior leaders have not developed a culture of sustained improvement over time. They have not established a clear enough vision for the school's curriculum or high enough expectations of the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders do not plan carefully enough to secure improvement in important aspects of the school's work such as ensuring that all pupils make the progress they are capable of. Although leaders plan a programme of monitoring activities, they do not use the evidence gathered sufficiently to evaluate progress. This means that they do not have a clear enough picture of the quality of teaching and the impact this has on pupils' progress in developing and applying knowledge, skills and understanding.

A minority of staff are beginning to engage with professional learning led by local partner schools, which is designed to support the construction of a broad curriculum. However, this has not yet had an impact across the school.

A few teachers have benefited from targeted professional development linked to the school improvement plan. For example, teachers in the younger classes have worked with a local school to develop provision in the outdoor area. This has resulted in developing younger pupils' independent skills successfully.

Overall, teachers have too few opportunities to engage in professional learning that improves the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers do not share the good practice that exists within the school.

Leaders address a minority of national priorities suitably. The school has been successful in implementing ALN reform. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual targets. However, the school's work towards the implementation of Curriculum for Wales is at a very early stage of development. Provision for the progression of pupils' skills is also underdeveloped.

The governing body is generally supportive of the school. Governors have positive relationships with leaders and an appropriate awareness of national priorities. For example, they have a sound understanding of ALN reform and the steps the school has taken to address this priority. Governors fulfil their statutory duties to promote healthy eating and drinking appropriately. However, they are over-reliant on information they receive from the headteacher in relation to the progress of learners. This means that governors are unable to challenge and support the work of the school effectively.

Alongside the headteacher, governors manage the school's finances suitably. They make appropriate use of the pupil development grant to provide targeted interventions to improve pupils' emotional literacy as well as their skills in mathematics and English. However, currently leaders do not sufficiently monitor the impact that spending has on outcomes for pupils affected by socio-economic disadvantage and as a result leaders are unclear whether the actions taken support pupils well enough.

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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