



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

A report on
Cyfarthfa Park Primary School
Cyfarthfa Park
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 8RE

Date of inspection: January 2024

by

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

This inspection was undertaken as part of pilot inspection arrangements. As a result, this report may be slightly different in format to other published reports for providers in the sector.

Summary

Cyfarthfa Park Primary School is a happy, caring school where leaders and staff work exceptionally well together and place pupil well-being at the heart of their work. The headteacher, governors and senior leaders work with dedication and passion to forge a strong partnership with pupils and parents, creating an environment where all are valued and welcome.

Staff are thoughtful professionals who take every opportunity to improve their teaching and as a result, most lessons are engaging and support pupils' learning effectively. Teachers use a range of worthwhile strategies to understand and support pupils' learning and a particular strength of the school is the provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). As a result, nearly all pupils across the school make strong progress in most areas of their learning.

The school is developing a broad and engaging curriculum, which ensures that pupils learn about their local area and the history of Wales. Opportunities for pupils to understand diversity in modern-day Wales are at an earlier stage of development. The school plans well to develop pupils' language and communication skills, and this helps pupils to think carefully about their work, share their ideas and listen carefully to others. A beneficial reading culture and purposeful opportunities for writing contribute positively to pupils' progress.

Most pupils develop as confident mathematicians and teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills and use them across the curriculum. Planning for a wider range of mathematical skills, such as handling data or shape and space, is sometimes less well developed. Staff and leaders are working well to make improvements to this aspect of learning.

Leaders and governors know their school well and work diligently to ensure that the school continues to improve. They make the best use of the school's resources, for example by ensuring that the learning environment for younger pupils is vibrant and engaging and not limited by the school site.

Evaluation

Leaders, staff, and governors at Cyfarthfa Park Primary are a dedicated team who work exceptionally well together to provide a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for all their pupils. Leaders and staff serve as strong role models and approach their work with energy and warmth. This builds effective relationships between pupils and adults and fosters a strong sense of community across the school and with its families.

Since the covid pandemic, many pupils enter school with speech, language, and social skills significantly below that which would normally be expected. A strength of the school is the highly effective support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) leads a skilled team of teaching assistants, and all staff collaborate effectively to identify the support that best meets pupils' learning and well-being needs. As a result, nearly all pupils, including those with ALN and those disadvantaged by poverty, make strong progress across the curriculum.

Leaders and staff work well together to provide a vibrant learning environment for all pupils, overcoming the challenges posed by a split site and aging buildings. For instance, staff consider carefully the best possible use of space and create stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments for foundation learning. Consequently, younger pupils benefit from the many purposeful opportunities that help them to develop their language and physical skills successfully.

Teaching is consistently effective across the school. Staff have developed a range of useful strategies enabling them to assess pupils' progress, during lessons and over time. They adjust their teaching thoughtfully to meet the learning needs of their pupils. For example, they share clear success criteria, talk through modelled examples of work, and discuss strengths and common misconceptions with pupils through individual and whole-class feedback. As a result, most pupils understand how to move forward in their learning and are developing as reflective individuals who think carefully about their work.

Overall, the school's curriculum is broad, balanced and engaging. Staff incorporate meaningful opportunities for pupils to explore the heritage of their local area and Wales. For example, pupils learn about the historical impact of the Cyfarthfa Iron Works on their town and collaborate with the Merthyr Historical Society to study and re-enact the journey of Welsh settlers to Patagonia. Pupils take pride in their Welsh culture and cultivate a sense of belonging to their community.

Staff plan effectively to nurture pupils' artistic and performance skills. For example, pupils actively participate in music workshops and produce artwork to showcase to parents by creating an art gallery in the local castle. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about different religions and cultures around the world. However, opportunities for pupils to broaden their understanding of diversity in modern day Wales are less well developed.

Provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, language and communication skills is strong across the school. Leaders ensure that staff receive

effective professional development to support their teaching, for example in developing pupils' oracy skills, and teachers collaborate effectively to improve their practice.

Cameo: Effective Approaches to Oracy and Its Impact on Developing Critical Thinkers

Leaders and staff ensure that there is a shared approach to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. This approach is well integrated into teaching in nearly all classes. Staff equip pupils with the language and vocabulary they need to become reflective learners, fostering their confidence to respectfully challenge each other's thinking. This approach is deeply rooted across many areas of the curriculum; for instance, pupils use their language skills to evaluate their own learning, engage in purposeful discussions about their reading, and articulate their ideas for solving mathematical problems.

There is a strong culture of reading embedded across the school. Staff ensure that younger pupils have a secure understanding of phonics and, as they progress, provide wider opportunities to enhance their fluency and comprehension through regular and purposeful reading activities. As a result of this consistent, whole-school approach to the teaching of reading and oracy across the school, pupils make exemplary progress in their speaking, listening and reading skills, often from low starting points.

Staff ensure that pupils have frequent and purposeful opportunities to apply their writing skills across the curriculum. They are reflective practitioners and work well together to make improvements to their teaching, such as offering more focused opportunities for pupils to edit and refine their written work. As a result, most pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills.

Teachers plan well for the progressive development of pupils' number skills. Staff have engaged in effective professional learning, resulting in high-quality teaching that incorporates a clear understanding of how pupils develop their understanding of number. For example, staff support the youngest pupils to develop their number skills through purposeful play activities such as counting blocks when building a wall. They provide opportunities for older pupils to combine numbers and symbols to solve problems involving fractions. Staff plan suitably for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. For example, Year 3 pupils create tally charts and bar graphs in Welsh lessons to gather information on their favourite hobbies. However, planning for the progressive development of pupils' broader mathematical skills, such as handling data, is at an earlier stage of development.

The headteacher and senior leaders are well respected in the school community and have forged a dedicated team of staff who work well with parents to promote an inclusive family ethos. Most parents value the support they receive for their children and opportunities to be involved in school life, such as participating in class open days.

The governing body fulfils its roles and responsibilities well. Governors serve as critical friends to the school, actively monitoring progress and challenging improvement in important areas. They collaborate with school leaders and the family

liaison officer to monitor pupils' attendance rigorously and identify areas of concern. They support the school to ensure that pupils' levels of attendance, particularly vulnerable pupils, continue to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

Cameo: Thoughtful, Strategic Governance

Governors have a broad range of skills and experiences, that benefit both the pupils and the staff. A particular strength is how governors consider opportunities to improve the impact of their work, for example reflecting on how pupils' views could inform their strategic decision making. They are not afraid to make difficult decisions that benefit the strategic direction of the school, such as allocating resources to extend the provision for nursery age pupils to full day sessions.

Leaders develop a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development through purposeful and well-organised self-evaluation activity. There is a robust culture of continuous improvement throughout the school where leaders manage change sensibly. They ensure that important improvements, for example in the teaching of literacy and numeracy, are given sufficient time to embed and impact positively on pupils' progress. Consequently, staff well-being is high and across the school there is a 'Can Do' attitude where staff collaborate exceptionally well to focus on positive outcomes for pupils.

Statutory compliance

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including use of the pupil development grant.

The school's arrangements for site security do not give any cause for concern.

Recommendations and next steps

We have made one recommendation to help the school continue to improve:

R1 Further refine the curriculum to strengthen opportunities for pupils to apply their wider maths skills and learn about the diverse nature of Wales

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

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

Appendix 1: About Cyfarthfa Park Primary School

Name of provider	Cyfarthfa Park Primary School
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	446
Pupils of statutory school age	330
Number in nursery classes	56
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%)	16.6%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 13.2%)	10.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/12/2015
Start date of inspection	22/01/2024

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.

Appendix 2: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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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