



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

A report on

Cwmaman Primary School

**Glamaman Road
Cwmaman
Aberdare
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF44 6LA**

Date of inspection: March 2024

by

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

About Cwmaman Primary School

Name of provider	Cwmaman 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	214
Pupils of statutory school age	155
Number in nursery classes	23
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%)	35.2%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 13.2%)	22.6%
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	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	11/03/2024

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.

Overview

Cwmaman Primary School is both a caring, nurturing primary school and a hub of activity and support for the local community. Senior leaders develop strong connections with pupils, families and the community, to reduce the impact of challenges, including poverty, on pupil progress and experiences.

Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Staff know the pupils well and use this to provide effective additional learning and emotional support when needed. Leaders value the well-being of all and, as a result, staff and pupils feel cared for, are proud of their school and enjoy attending. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, with a strong focus on valuing kindness and inspiring all staff and pupils to be their best. As a result, nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well and have high aspirations for their future.

Staff have developed an exciting 'Cwmaman Curriculum', which provides the innovation for teachers to plan engaging learning experiences that immerse pupils in the rich history of their local area and Wales. Learning activities capture the pupils' imagination and provide purposeful contexts for them to use their literacy, numeracy and digital skills confidently to solve problems.

Teachers use their sound understanding of progression to ensure that pupils build on their learning in lessons and over-time, and as a result, most pupils make at least expected progress in their learning. In the best cases, teachers provide valuable feedback that informs pupils of their next steps in learning successfully. However, this is inconsistent across the school and many pupils do not recall their next steps in learning with ease.

The strong leadership team, supported by knowledgeable governors, monitor the quality of teaching and learning rigorously. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and a strong track record of addressing areas for improvement and national priorities. The headteacher is a compassionate leader and his approach to developing an inclusive and caring school is greatly appreciated by parents, staff and pupils.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve teacher feedback to ensure that pupils understand and can act upon the next steps in their learning

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

A majority of pupils start in nursery with skills and knowledge significantly below that expected for their age. During their time at school, most pupils make at least good progress from their starting points. Nearly all pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make strong progress and develop well as confident learners.

Nearly all pupils make rapid progress with their communication skills. In the nursery, they talk enthusiastically about how to present their bouquets of flowers when playing together in the flower shop. By Year 3, most pupils communicate effectively to discuss their right to food and their responsibility to make healthy food choices. In Year 5, pupils contribute their ideas to group debates confidently. For example, when debating if children should be allowed to sit in The Senedd and make decisions, they use mature vocabulary to put forward their suggestions and listen to the views of others to provide a balanced argument.

As they progress through the school, most pupils develop as confident readers, and many develop a love of reading. Younger pupils hold books correctly and read stories from the illustrations. By Year 2, most use their phonic skills to decode unfamiliar words. In Year 4, most pupils have a secure grasp of the reading skills needed to tackle new text. For example, they reread sentences to correct misread words. Most older pupils use the blurb to help them select a book and they read books by a range of authors, including classics by C. S. Lewis and Lewis Carroll.

Overall, most pupils make strong progress in writing. In nursery, a few pupils make marks on paper to represent letters and words when writing a list of the flowers in their shop. By Year 2, most pupils use basic punctuation correctly. Spelling and grammar are generally accurate and many pupils use time connectives appropriately when writing a recount of the story of St. Dwynwen. Older pupils organise their work into paragraphs, using punctuation, including commas and speech marks, with increasing accuracy. They write for a range of purposes and carefully consider how to engage the reader. For example, they use descriptive vocabulary in their diary entries to capture the feelings of miners when faced with the hazards of working underground.

Most pupils use their Welsh language skills enthusiastically throughout the school day. In nursery, they understand and follow Welsh instructions as part of their daily routine. In reception, they count to ten in Welsh when completing their work in mathematics. Most pupils in Year 1 use Welsh vocabulary for colours confidently when playing games. By Year 3, many pupils talk confidently about who they are, and they share their likes and dislikes about food and hobbies. Many older pupils use the past tense with support to explain where they went on holiday.

Most pupils across the school make strong progress in developing their number skills in maths lesson and use these skills with confidence in other areas of learning. In nursery, many pupils recognise numbers to 5 with ease when selecting the number rocks in their small world play area. In Year 2, most pupils add and subtract numbers to 100 and identify most coins accurately. Many pupils tell the time to half hour

intervals and describe the properties of 2D shapes well. By Year 4, many pupils present data in tally charts and bar graphs skilfully to record information gained from analysing facts about mining accidents. The oldest pupils use the four operations to solve complex word problems confidently. For example, they calculate the cost of making the Olympic medals in the Royal Mint.

Most pupils' digital skills develop well, and they use technology skilfully to support their learning across the curriculum. A notable strength is the development of coding skills. In Year 2 most pupils input directions to a movable toy to find treasure on a map. By Year 4, most pupils accurately program a device to represent what miners would use to warn others of danger in the pit. The oldest pupils create spreadsheets of castles in Wales and use technology to compose music for the Eisteddfod.

As they move through the school, most pupils solve problems with confidence. In Year 2, most pupils use their understanding of direction to give instructions to their peers to help them navigate a map. By Year 4, pupils work in pairs to prioritise strategies for looking after a dragon. Pupils in Year 6 calculate the cost of materials and carefully consider the allocated budget when making decisions about the design of a sustainable city for the future.

Most pupils develop their artistic, creative and physical skills well. The youngest pupils begin to develop their fine motor skills and handle tools such as paint brushes with increasing control and finesse. Older pupils use charcoal to explore different techniques to create texture. In Years 1 and 2, pupils demonstrate control and rhythm when folk dancing and older pupils build on these physical skills suitably during their 'fit for fun' sessions.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel safe and happy in school and the working relationships between staff and pupils is a strength. Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well, they show kindness and respect to each other and are welcoming of visitors. Most pupils settle quickly into daily routines, they move through the school calmly and manage transitions within the school day well.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are highly engaged in lessons. They talk about school life, their personal interests and the activities that they enjoy enthusiastically. Younger pupils express themselves confidently through a range of stimulating experiences, including role play, dance, and drama. Most pupils work well in pairs and small groups, they show maturity when working independently and sustain concentration appropriately. Most pupils value the verbal and written feedback they receive from teachers. In the best cases, pupils use this feedback to improve their work, but few pupils recall their next steps in learning with ease.

Many pupils are developing as ambitious learners. Reception pupils are inquisitive and show great imagination when discovering that the dragon egg has hatched, and the dragon has disappeared. Older pupils challenge themselves suitably and have high aspirations about what they can achieve. For example, they choose the appropriate level of challenge independently when selecting activities, considering the activity that will enable them to make progress in their learning. Most pupils show resilience when solving problems that require them to apply their numeracy skills. For

example, they try different strategies and remain calm when working out the combination code to access a valuable item.

Nearly all pupils respond well to positive encouragement and strive to do their best. They appreciate the recognition from staff for their hard work and good behaviour, for example, they feel proud to receive a leaf for the tree of kindness. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when working online. Digital leaders design online safety posters showing their understanding of their digital footprint and present important information about online safety to younger pupils and parents.

As they move through the school, many pupils enjoy the opportunities to be involved in a wide range of leadership roles such as Criw Cymraeg, Healthy Schools and School Council. These groups impact positively on the wider life of the school. For example, pupils email the headteacher to suggest how the lunchtime rota could operate differently, to ensure fairness for all during lunchbreaks. Many pupils enjoy the opportunities to help others, for example raising money for local charities and growing food to sell in the community food bank.

Most older pupils talk about their rights as children confidently and understand that they should also respect the rights of their others. Most older pupils develop a strong understanding of equality and diversity and show an increasing awareness of the need to treat everyone with respect and to celebrate differences. For example, when discussing different sports personalities, they consider how Muslims respect Ramadan whilst training and playing sport.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and choose healthy snacks to eat during morning break. They value the benefits of regular exercise and enjoy taking part in the wide range of active after-school clubs, including football and dance.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has a clear curriculum vision that places a strong emphasis on preparing pupils to become independent learners. The 'Cwmaman Curriculum' provides opportunities for pupils to learn about the rich history of their locality and Wales. For example, they learn about life in Cwmaman in 1918, including the colliery that stood on the site of their school, the journey of coal to Cardiff and its export across the world. Teachers interpret the whole school topic 'Cymru am Byth' skilfully, to reflect the age and interests of their pupils. Teachers plan authentic contexts for learning, for example, pupils plan a visit to Snowdonia for the First Minister, calculating distance and the cost of travel. In addition, pupils have opportunities to explore notable features of towns, cities and landmarks across Wales, such as the nearby Bannau Brycheiniog mountain range.

Teachers plan interesting lessons that engage pupils well. They consider prior learning and build upon this effectively. Teachers know their pupils well and encourage them to become independent in their learning and to take calculated risks. Staff ask high-quality questions to assess pupils' understanding and to deepen learning. Teachers use their sound understanding of progression to ensure that pupils build on their literacy, numeracy and digital skills suitably in lessons and over-

time. Teachers use a progressive Welsh language plan to develop pupil's Welsh language skills effectively. Teachers' use of the Welsh language in formal and informal situations is a strength.

Teachers share the next steps in learning with younger pupils effectively. They provide written feedback for older pupils, highlighting misspelt words and grammatical errors. However, in most cases, written feedback does not focus sharply enough on what pupils need to do to improve their work and pupils have too few opportunities to assess their own learning. Teachers use their assessment of learning to monitor individual pupil progress, they meet with senior leaders regularly to discuss pupil progress and identify pupils who may need additional support. Teachers communicate pupil progress with parents regularly through detailed written reports and mobile applications.

Teachers plan interesting places for pupils to visit to enhance their learning, for example, older pupils visit a tropical indoor zoo when learning about rainforests across the world. They invite a range of guests to school to encourage pupils to be aspirational for their future, including the police, nurses and a Welsh Commonwealth team. Staff deliver a range of afterschool clubs to further develop pupils' skills and broaden their interests.

The school teaches pupils about the history and experiences of people from different cultures, for example, they look at influential women such as Betty Campbell. They discuss why judgements should not be made based on appearance or colour of skin. This important topic is prominent in the school's well-considered curriculum for religion, values and ethics (RVE). The school has a strong focus on supporting pupils' well-being and provide many opportunities for pupils to consider taking responsibility for their own well-being. For example, they teach the importance of staying safe when using the internet and encourage them to make healthy choices with food and drink.

Care, support and guidance

Staff create a caring and inclusive community for pupils and their families. They build strong working relationships with parents and provide valuable support when needed.

The support for pupils with ALN is a strength of the school. There are robust systems in place to identify pupils in need of support and the school plan an effective range of targeted interventions to meet their individual needs. Staff monitor the impact of additional support carefully and effective strategies are shared with all staff to support learning in class. Senior leaders have made strong progress with implementing national reform and all staff have received appropriate training to support this work. Staff communicate effectively with a range of agencies to help support pupils. For example, the behaviour support team provide staff with strategies to ensure that there are consistent approaches to managing behaviour throughout the school.

The school provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of their rights as children. For example, when looking at the history of the local area, older pupils compare their rights with the rights of children working in coal mines. As a result, many pupils develop an appreciation for what they have, and an empathy for others less fortunate than themselves.

The school celebrates Welsh heritage and culture successfully. Younger pupils learn about the symbolic Welsh dragon and then create and perform a dragon dance. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to learn about the significance of Wales having their own National Assembly. For example, teachers plan a visit to the Senedd, for pupils to understand the process in place for making important laws for Wales.

The school plans worthwhile lessons and daily acts of collective worship, for pupils to reflect on their values and to learn about the beliefs and traditions of different faith groups. Teachers plan an integrated approach to learning about different cultures, for example, older pupils research how Christmas is celebrated around the world. Teachers support pupils to understand how different beliefs affect how we live our lives. For example, recognising how professional footballers manage their training when observing Ramadan.

Teachers plan a good range of school trips and visitors to school, to provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to influence decisions that affect them in their daily lives. For example, during a recent trip to the Senedd, pupils discussed whether or not the length of the summer holidays should be changed as part of a consultation on reorganising the school year. The school provide a suitable range of extra-curricular activities to develop their skills and interests successfully.

There is a strong safeguarding ethos, and all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. All staff use effective strategies to promote positive attitudes towards managing behaviour. The newly built school provides a safe and secure learning environment.

Leadership and management

Leaders have successfully supported staff and families to make the transition from two primary schools to one inclusive learning community at the heart of Cwmaman village. The headteacher has a clear vision, with a focus on encouraging all to be their best, be kind and show respect. Nearly all staff, pupils and parents are proud of Cwmaman School and feel a real sense of belonging. Leaders prioritise the well-being of pupils and staff and share the importance of fairness and inclusion regularly.

Senior leaders have robust procedures in place to evaluate the quality of all aspects of school life. Staff and governors analyse the information they gather from their observations alongside assessment data, to identify the school's strengths and areas for development accurately. The school has a strong track record of making sustained improvements over time, which have had a positive impact on pupils' learning and well-being. For example, following a whole-school focus on improving the teaching of numerical reasoning skills, most pupils made significant improvement with their mathematical reasoning skills.

Leaders manage the performance of all staff well. They set ambitious performance targets linked closely to the school's priorities and individual staff needs. All staff have regular access to professional learning to improve their teaching. Teachers share their success with other schools, providing valuable training for teachers across the region. For example, following the success in improving reasoning skills, teachers from other schools were invited to observe good practice and attend training with teachers in Cwmaman School.

Senior leaders have established clear roles and procedures for safeguarding pupils. Staff and governors understand their roles and their responsibility to ensure that all pupils are safe and happy in school. Governors fulfil their statutory duty to ensure the provision of healthy eating and drinking and they support senior leaders diligently in driving national priorities. For example, the experienced link governor for additional learning needs provides beneficial advice and support to the ALNCo and this has helped the school to successfully implement the Welsh Government's ALN reform. Leaders seek and value the views of governors when making decisions, for example, when creating a shared vision for the 'Cwmaman Curriculum', governors were invited to contribute their ideas.

School leaders, supported by governors, manage the school's finances effectively. They plan strategically to prioritise funding the school's current priorities and manage challenging financial situations sensitively. Governors demonstrate sound knowledge of how senior leaders use the pupil development grant (PDG) to support pupils and families experiencing poverty and how this support reduces the impact this has on their educational attainment and well-being. For example, families can purchase food parcels at a heavily reduced price and many parents benefit from a community grant scheme to purchase essential household items. In addition, leaders carefully consider the cost of school trips and plan affordable experiences for the pupils during the school holidays, such as interactions with animals and breakfast with Santa.

The headteacher has developed strong professional relationships with parents. He ensures that he is visible and available to listen to parents when needed. As a result, he has an extensive understanding of families, which enables him to provide support promptly. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of this support and the open communication they receive about their child's learning and well-being. Leaders ask for parent feedback regularly through questionnaires, they listen carefully to the views of parents and make reasonable adjustments to the school's provision when necessary.

The school has created a strong community hub in the village of Cwmaman, providing a haven of support for the different generations. For example, residents enjoy a weekly coffee morning, a place to socialise and gain invaluable information and support for their daily living and well-being. The school plans innovative experiences for parents and pupils. For example, parents and pupils make healthy and nutritious meals in the 'cook for the family' workshops with professional chef Rebecca Kedward.

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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