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

A report on

Twynyrodyn Community School

Gilfach Cynon
Twynyrodyn
CF47 0LW

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Twynyrodyn Community School

Name of provider	Twynyrodyn Community School
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	N/A
Number of pupils on roll	315
Pupils of statutory school age	234
Number in nursery classes	40
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%)	18.9%
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%)	15.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.3%
Date of headteacher appointment	12/04/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	13/01/2015
Start date of inspection	26/02/2024

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

All staff and pupils are proud to be a part of Twynyrodyn Community School. Leaders have created a clear vision for the school and work purposefully to create a safe and inclusive environment where pupils and staff feel valued and supported.

The school provides strong support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), particularly those in the learning resource base and early intervention class. Learning support assistants work effectively with pupils in small groups, offering valuable individual support for vulnerable pupils. As a result, most pupils make good progress across the school and develop their reading, writing and numeracy skills well. All pupils have strong speaking skills. They confidently talk about their work and school life in general and contribute effectively in lessons. Teachers and support staff provide effective opportunities for pupils to develop a broad range of skills well in their work across the curriculum. However, provision to develop pupils' skills in Welsh is less well-developed.

Staff know pupils well and create warm and supportive working relationships with them. As a result, nearly all pupils behave well in classes and at breaktimes, settling quickly into their lessons. Staff use questioning effectively in their teaching and many teachers plan stimulating lessons that have a clear purpose. These lessons enable pupils to make good progress in their learning from their various starting points, particularly in literacy and mathematics. However, approaches to teaching and assessment do not always enable pupils to develop effectively as independent learners.

The school provides a rich, broad and balanced range of learning experiences. For example, pupils enjoy the range of visits and visitors that enhance their curriculum, but the use of the outdoors is at an early stage of development across the school.

Governors support leaders well. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They manage spending diligently and strive to maintain a robust culture of safeguarding. Leaders and governors reflect effectively on what the school is doing well and how it can further improve. Teachers receive useful professional development and support, and the school manages its resources well.

Recommendations

R1   Improve pupils' Welsh language skills

R2   Provide pupils with opportunities to develop as independent learners

R3   Further develop outdoor learning experiences for all pupils

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 enter the school with skills at or above the level expected for their age. Most pupils throughout the school make strong progress. This includes those who have additional learning needs (ALN) and pupils in the learning resource base and early intervention class, who make good progress from their starting points. This strength in the pace of learning is equally true of pupils for whom English is an additional language and pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

The progress of pupils in their speaking and listening is a particular strength of the school. Younger pupils learn new vocabulary rapidly and co-operate well together on tasks. Pupils throughout the school listen carefully with good concentration. They explain themselves clearly and develop a good technical vocabulary in the context of their learning experiences. For example, Year 2 pupils explain that they are creating Roman Mosaics using geometric patterns. Many older pupils adapt their speech to the audience and build on the contribution of other pupils. They listen to others with respect and a growing empathy. By Year 6, many pupils are confident speakers who use a broad range of vocabulary well. They discuss sophisticated ideas around rights and values intelligently, showing respect in debate.

The development of pupils' speaking in Welsh is less effective. Whilst many pupils in Reception answer questions about feelings sensibly, many pupils do not build successfully on this start. Many older pupils can recall a few simple sentences, such as asking others how they are. However, their recall of most basic sentences is limited.

The progress most pupils make in reading is another strength of the school. Younger pupils quickly learn letter sounds and start to read simple words correctly. They read a good range of different types of books and can predict plot lines successfully. They use their reading skills very effectively across the breadth of the school's curriculum. Older pupils read with good understanding and expression. They broaden their skills successfully and, by Year 6, most pupils are mature readers. They discuss texts intelligently and use reading as a powerful tool for developing their learning.

Most pupils make consistently good progress in developing their writing skills. The youngest pupils soon grasp the purpose of writing in authentic contexts. For example, Reception pupils write down an order in the café in the role play area. As they progress through the school, pupils write for a good range of purposes. They develop a very effective vocabulary linked to the subject they are writing about, and writing becomes a significant factor in their learning. The oldest pupils write well

across the breadth of the curriculum, for example writing powerful poems about the holocaust.

Most pupils develop appropriate creative skills as they progress through the school. They practise their artistic skills suitably in worthwhile contexts. For example, they design Christmas cards and gave them to vulnerable adults in the community. Pupils' skills in music are beginning to develop well. For example, Year 3 pupils learn to play the recorder. However, pupils do not use their creative skills regularly to explore and experiment.

Most younger pupils develop their fine motor skills well in a variety of contexts. They also develop their gross motor skills appropriately through access to larger apparatus, such as bikes.

Many younger pupils develop digital skills appropriately. They begin to understand coding suitable by directing the movement of programmable toys. Older pupils combine text and images in presentations successfully. They begin to apply their digital skills effectively to enhance their learning. For example, the oldest pupils use databases successfully to analyse information. However, whilst pupils acquire an appropriate breadth of digital skills throughout the school, they are not always developing these skills systematically and building upon previous learning.

The progress most pupils make in mathematics throughout the school is particularly strong. Younger pupils develop a good understanding of number and begin to apply this knowledge effectively in practical situations. By Year 2, pupils become confident in a broad range of areas in mathematics. They measure accurately and handle data well. Older pupils continue this good progress and, by Year 6, many pupils are confident, competent mathematicians, working with numbers in the millions and beginning to use algebra successfully. They apply their skills across the curriculum effectively.

Many pupils throughout the school develop their thinking and problem solving skills well when explaining their mathematical thinking. They explain a point of view and build on the arguments of others, particularly when discussing rights and values. However, most pupils' ability to plan, analyse, evaluate and adapt their work to solve problems and tackle challenges is at an early stage of development.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils across the school have positive attitudes towards learning and enjoy their time at school. They participate enthusiastically in lessons, maintain a good level of interest in their work and follow routines happily.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and built on mutual respect, trust and fairness. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and know who they need to go to for support. They understand well what to do to keep themselves and others safe, including when working online. For example, they understand the importance of creating their own protective passwords and not sharing these with anyone else.

Pupils' well-being is a priority for the school and all pupils develop worthwhile strategies to help them to be mindful and calm, and to focus on their learning. For example, younger pupils create 'coping skills' books that assist them to regulate their emotions. The school's values of trust, compassion and support are reflected in nearly all pupils' behaviour. They behave well, are courteous and friendly. They interact with each other, staff and visitors enthusiastically and respectfully. They share equipment maturely and play well together.

Across the school, nearly all pupils listen attentively and participate well in lessons and activities. They make positive contributions during lessons. For example, older pupils eagerly share their learning about World War Two. Most pupils develop well as ambitious learners who have high expectations of themselves and know how to persevere. They talk positively about the challenges set by their teachers and are enthusiastic when trying something new. Pupils are confident and resilient, and take real pride in sharing their learning with others. They value feedback from their peers and adults. When given the opportunity, pupils use this well to improve their learning. For example, older pupils reflect and act upon feedback effectively when they write palindrome poems.

Many pupils show an understanding of making healthy choices. For example, they draw healthy plates and explain the importance of having fruit and vegetables in their diet. They understand the importance of regular exercise and are enthusiastic when given the opportunity to take part in physical activities. Nearly all pupils begin to develop as ethical, informed citizens. They show this through their understanding of concepts such as fairness, equity and empathy during their project work.

Most pupils who are part of pupil voice groups, feel that staff listen to them, that they are valued in their roles and that they are beginning to have an impact on the work of the school. For example, they design posters to advertise Christmas concerts and participate in assemblies. Most pupils understand the importance of regular attendance. Overall, most pupils are now attending school more regularly and on time, compared to this time last year. The number of persistent absentees has reduced.

Nearly all pupils can express ideas in a variety of ways. Older pupils enjoy deciding how to present their learning in project books. Although pupils are beginning to develop their creative and entrepreneurial skill, they are not yet consistently able to take the responsibility to plan and review their learning, think creatively, and solve problems.

Through learning about the concept of democracy, pupils develop their understanding of the purposes of rules, rewards and sanctions in school, and how laws are formed and apply to wider society. Older pupils explain the rights they have as children and make links between the various statements outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, in their work.

In a minority of cases, pupils suggest ideas at the beginning of their projects. For example, younger pupils think of questions they would like to ask when they visit the Roman Baths in Caerleon, such as 'what materials did they use to create their weapons?' However, overall, pupils' involvement in determining what and how they learn is at an early stage of development.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that aligns effectively to the principles of Curriculum for Wales and the school's vision and values. Teachers and other staff have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. They plan engaging activities that motivate pupils well. The learning environment is stimulating, and supports the development of pupils' skills in purposeful ways. Staff build strong relationships with the pupils, understand their needs and support them well. This includes those identified as needing additional support, those in the learning resource base and pupils in the early intervention class.

The school is developing a comprehensive plan for the progressive teaching of skills. This ensures that pupils build their skills, knowledge and understanding successfully over time. The school takes good account of how the areas of learning and experience work together cohesively. This ensures that there is a holistic approach to curriculum design and that pupil progress is systematic and strong. Teachers plan learning experiences that allow pupils to make relevant links to their lives and across the curriculum. Teachers provide a rich curriculum for pupils and are beginning to develop more authentic contexts for learning. For example, pupils create a historical website and receive feedback from the Richard the Third Society and write newsletters which are sent to parents. They arrange interesting visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum and enhance pupils' learning well. For example, local artists visit the school to work on projects with pupils on climate change.

Teachers plan and deliver learning experiences that engage and challenge many pupils and support them to make the best possible progress. Staff demonstrate good subject knowledge and are clear about the purpose of lessons and activities. They share this clearly with pupils. The classrooms and areas of provision for pupils are well resourced and calm, and they have a range of carefully planned activities. The school is beginning to develop purposeful outdoor activities and learning opportunities. However, this is not consistent throughout the school.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about their local history and community. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 consider the impact evacuees had on the local area during the Second World War. Staff model a range of greetings, instructions and questions in Welsh and the school provides regular opportunities to further develop pupils' Welsh oracy skills through daily Helpwr Heddiw sessions. However, overall, the provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is underdeveloped.

Teachers provide effective verbal feedback during lessons that encourages pupils to remain on task and focus on improving aspects of their work 'in the moment'. The quality of most teachers' written feedback is consistent with the school's feedback policy. However, teachers do not consistently provide purposeful opportunities for pupils respond to this and to make improvements to their work.

Teachers are developing effective opportunities for pupils to assess each other's work and beginning to help them to understand their own strengths and areas for improvement. For example, pupils work collaboratively online to write a description of Skellig, give each other feedback, and improve their artwork.

The school has embedded routines and strategies to promote pupils' engagement in learning and develop their skills. These are well established and consistent across the school. For example, the use of 'turn and talk' and 'call and respond' strategies keep pupils focused and provide effective opportunities to develop their oracy skills to a high level. Teachers use resources effectively such as such as 'knowledge organisers' to support pupils' learning, develop their knowledge and understanding, and assess pupil progress. However, opportunities for pupils to develop independence in their learning are at the early stages of development.

Care, support and guidance

The school supports all pupils' emotional, health and social needs very well so that they can engage positively with the school and benefit from the opportunities that it offers. This includes pupils in the learning resource base and early intervention class. It provides well-considered support for pupils' emotional health and well-being. As a result, pupils throughout the school are calm, enjoy school and are ready to learn.

The school makes good provision for pupils with additional learning needs to ensure that they progress well from their starting points. Individual development plans are purposeful and tailored to pupils' specific needs. Pupils clearly benefit from these plans and regularly meet the targets they are set. The school keeps parents well informed about provision for these pupils. The school supports pupils for whom English is an additional language effectively through the structured, systematic teaching of vocabulary. The school provides appropriate provision for pupils' physical well-being, including supporting pupils with specific individual needs.

The school deploys resources and staff effectively to ensure that pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged contexts can access all activities and learning experiences. The school works well with outside agencies to meet the additional needs of pupils, including supporting vulnerable pupils and those in the learning support bases. For example, the school has an effective relationship with the local educational psychologist that ensures that pupils have appropriate targets for their development and the necessary resources to achieve them.

The school is beginning to help pupils from all backgrounds and abilities to take on purposeful responsibilities and to contribute to the school and wider community.

The school helps pupils to develop a good understanding of their identity and heritage and how they relate to the local community and the wider world. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 explore the changes that happened to Merthyr in the 19th Century as part of their project work. The school helps pupils to understand issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion very effectively. It tailors its curriculum to promote a deeper understanding of these issues. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils consider the holocaust as part of their project on the Second World War. The school develops its shared values of trust, compassion and support very well. Staff model these very effectively, and pupils treat each other well throughout the school and support one another in all aspects of school life.

The way the school helps pupils to understand the needs and rights of others is a strength. Staff use the curriculum well to emphasise the importance of human rights. It promotes principles that help pupils to distinguish effectively between behaviour

that is right and wrong and in practical everyday situations. This contributes positively to pupils' feelings of being safe in the school and provides secure boundaries for their behaviour.

The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to explore their spiritual and ethical beliefs. Teachers give pupils a broad understanding of beliefs from across the world. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils compare St David with a saint from Islam and a Mahatma from Hinduism.

The school is beginning to provide opportunities to encourage pupils to participate in the arts and in sport and recreation, for example through participation in a local rugby tournament. However, this is at an early stage of development.

Leaders embed a strong culture of safeguarding among all staff. As a result, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. The school communicates the importance of regular attendance effectively.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is knowledgeable, and passionate about how the school can make a difference in the local community. He has led a number of significant improvements in a short space of time, ably assisted by senior leaders. Leaders have worked very effectively with staff, pupils, governors and the local community to establish a clear vision based on a culture of self-reflection and improvement, focussing on teaching and learning. They model and promote professional values and behaviours effectively. They work well as a team, and this contributes positively to the overall ethos of the school. For example, leaders collaborate purposefully to provide clear direction for the school's curriculum to develop provision across the areas of learning and experience.

Leaders have clear aims and strategic objectives, which focus appropriately on school improvement and on national priorities. For example, the school's work on Curriculum for Wales is developing effectively. However, the provision for developing pupils' Welsh language skills is underdeveloped.

There is a clear senior leadership structure with an effective balance of defined roles and shared teamwork. All members of the senior leadership team have a good understanding of the work of other leaders and provide support as needed. Similarly, staff across the school have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Senior leaders share a joint ambition to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils at the school.

Leaders set high expectations for themselves, their colleagues and pupils. They model effective collaboration and promote a cooperative approach to all they do within the school. This collaboration includes a wealth of opportunities for productive professional learning, and the sharing of good practice between leaders, teachers and support staff. These have had a positive impact on teaching and learning. The school places a high priority on developing its staff and supporting their professional development. All staff take part in performance management to ensure that they continue to develop their skills and have relevant professional learning opportunities

linked to the priorities of the school. Leaders provide good support to help members of staff make improvements, for example through learning walks and by applying a coaching model to support staff that has improved standards of teaching and learning and is now embedded effectively across the school. There is a strong culture of sharing effective practice within the school and this is beginning to develop through the collaboration with other schools.

Leaders encourage parents and carers to play an active part in school life and ensure that the school engages with families in meaningful ways that make a positive difference to provision and experiences. For example, parents attend workshops on how to support their child to develop their reading skills at home.

The governing body brings together people from a broad range of backgrounds and has a wide skill set that leaders within the school utilise effectively to inform the work of the school. Governors provide strong support and robust, yet purposeful, challenge for school leaders, and hold them to account, particularly in relation to pupil progress and achievement, and financial matters. The school uses specific grant funding effectively to ensure beneficial support for identified pupils. For example, leaders use the pupil development grant well to provide a range of intervention strategies to support pupils to improve their well-being, and literacy and numeracy skills.

The governing body has a clear understanding of its statutory responsibilities, for example in relation to their role in embedding a positive safeguarding culture. Governors ensure that the school has a clear policy to promote healthy eating and drinking. However, this is not implemented effectively by all members of staff.

Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's work, gathered from the headteacher's termly reports, focused visits to the school, learning walks, listening to learners and work scrutiny. This ensures that they have a comprehensive understanding of the school's work, strengths and areas for development. For example, governors carried out a listening to learners session focusing on health and well-being. They identified strengths and areas for development, which were shared with the school.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website
(www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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