



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

**A report on**

**Ty Sign Primary School**

**Elm Drive  
Risca  
NP11 6HJ**

**Date of inspection: January 2024**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Ty Sign Primary School

Name of provider	Ty Sign Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	494
Pupils of statutory school age	384
Number in nursery classes	52
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%)	33.2%
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%)	22.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	08/01/2024
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
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](https://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

Ty Sign Primary School provides a welcoming, caring and inclusive environment for its pupils. Staff value pupils highly and understand and support their well-being needs effectively. Throughout the school, relationships are strong and there is a positive atmosphere of mutual respect. The Specialist Resource Base (SRB) further enhances the school's inclusive ethos and staff cater very well for the needs of the pupils who attend the SRB.

Behaviour across the school is good. In most cases, pupils are polite, kind and respectful both in class and at playtimes. Staff work hard to ensure that the school is a safe place, and the governing body supports the school's work to ensure that pupils feel safe, valued and celebrated.

Pupils, parents and staff have welcomed the new headteacher and ensured that her very short time at the school has been valuable. There is a good culture of staff working and planning together. However current plans for the school's curriculum do not identify the progression of pupils' skills well enough. As a result, despite the interesting nature of much of the curriculum offer, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of.

The governing body is supportive of the school and proud of the pupils and staff. However, the work of leaders and governors to evaluate the school's effectiveness does not clearly identify aspects that need to be improved. The school does not always address its most important improvement needs and as a result there are inconsistencies in elements of the school's practice and provision. Over time, the school has not provided staff with enough opportunities to develop their professional skills, such as through sharing effective practice to support improvements in teaching and learning.

Across the school, pupils enjoy their learning and the opportunities they have to experience new things, play with their friends and become ethically informed citizens. In general, they understand the value of a healthy lifestyle, staying safe online and attending school daily. However, not enough pupils attend school regularly enough and too many arrive at school late each day. In general, pupils who do not attend school regularly do not make enough the progress in their learning.

During their time at the school, pupils develop a strong sense of belonging to both their local community and Wales. School staff ensure that all pupils have a wide variety of interesting opportunities to learn about their locality, visit places further afield and take part in cultural events. Pupils enjoy these and talk with pride about their school experiences, local area and cultural heritage.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve self-evaluation and school improvement processes so that they focus on the school's immediate needs and fully include all staff and governors

- R2 Improve attendance and punctuality
- R3 Ensure that all staff engage in high quality and strategically planned professional learning that supports whole school improvement, in particular by addressing inconsistencies in teaching
- R4 Develop a whole-school understanding of, and plan for, progression in the curriculum to improve the progress pupils make as they move through the school

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. 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 about 12 months after the publication of this report.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Many pupils start school with literacy and numeracy skills below those expected for their age. Overall, many pupils make appropriate progress during their time at the school, including those in the school's specialist resource base (SRB). However, too many pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), pupils who are eligible for free school meals and the most able make slower progress from their individual starting points.

When engaging with each other, many pupils speak confidently. They are eager to talk about their school experience with visitors and share their thoughts and understanding willingly. For example, younger pupils describe in impressive detail how to make Welsh dragons out of different materials and make accurate links to Welsh culture. As they move through the school, many pupils continue to make good progress and express their ideas effectively using age-appropriate vocabulary. For example, they speak with maturity and confidence when sharing their knowledge and understanding of the importance of online safety.

During their time at school, most pupils make beneficial progress in reading. Many younger pupils engage in class stories with glee. In the youngest classes, many pupils listen to stories attentively and retell them using simple words and phrases. By Year 2, most pupils show enthusiasm for reading independently and use their knowledge of phonics well to support their progress. They build words accurately and begin to read chosen texts successfully. By Year 6, most pupils read with appropriate fluency and understanding and accurately skim and scan for information from a range of online sources, information texts and stories.

In the youngest classes, many pupils develop effective mark making skills and begin to write simple words. By Year 2, many pupils develop suitable writing skills and begin to write in short, coherent sentences. For example, they write instructions for looking after a pet dinosaur using correct punctuation and suitable spelling accuracy. As they move through the school, many pupils begin to write appropriately for a range of audiences and use more imaginative vocabulary choices. For example, Year 6 pupils write interesting persuasive letters to politicians requesting a new monument for the town of Risca. However, too many of the school's oldest pupils do not write well enough across the curriculum and do not present their work with sufficient care.

By the time they leave the school, many pupils develop appropriate mathematical skills. The school's youngest pupils develop a sound, basic knowledge of number through an interesting range of practical activities. In younger classes, many pupils begin to obtain suitable knowledge of number and apply useful strategies to solve basic problems. Many older pupils add, subtract and multiply larger numbers using a range of methods effectively and a majority plot coordinates and calculate missing angles accurately. However, a minority of older pupils misunderstand too many mathematical concepts. Teachers do not always address these quickly enough, and this hinders the progress pupils make.

As they move through the school, many pupils make suitable progress in the development of their digital skills. By Year 2, a majority of pupils use tablet devices and computers soundly to develop basic coding skills. Many older pupils use digital devices with increasing confidence and independence and begin to use them to enhance their wider learning. For instance, Year 6 pupils create relevant databases of world landmarks and locate, organise and sort information effectively. However, pupils do not systematically develop the full range of digital skills as they progress through the school. They do not always have the prior knowledge needed to complete their digital tasks successfully and this limits the progress they make.

Most pupils make an effective start in developing their basic skills in Welsh through their early experiences in school. Most younger pupils enjoy learning a range of Welsh songs and rhymes and join in with zest. They confidently explore a range of practical games and take pride in using the Welsh language. However, as pupils move through the school, the progress they make slows. A minority of older pupils respond confidently in Welsh when asked more complex questions. In general though, older pupils do not have the skills or confidence to speak in Welsh to a standard expected for their age.

Most pupils develop their creative skills well as they progress through the school. Younger pupils perform traditional folk dances confidently, making controlled movements and gestures to express themselves effectively. Many older pupils develop a good range of artistic skills and blend colours carefully using a variety of media to create interesting imagery. Most pupils develop their physical skills well during daily playground activities, extra-curricular clubs and in PE lessons. However, pupils' ability to solve problems and to think critically is underdeveloped.

## **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Throughout the school, pupils are happy, respectful and feel safe. They are confident that adults and their peers will help them if they have a problem. As a result of the strong support and encouragement that they receive, most pupils develop a strong sense of positive well-being. Many pupils attend school regularly and, in general, pupils understand the importance of regular school attendance. However too many pupils are persistently absent and not punctual. The attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is particularly low and where this is the case it limits the progress they make in their learning.

Behaviour across the school is consistently good. Pupils move around the school in a sensible manner and show respect and maturity towards the contributions of others. Most respect each other's views and consider different opinions in a reasonable and balanced manner. Most pupils interact co-operatively, take turns and support each other well when playing and socialising during lessons and break times.

Most pupils, including those in the SRB, develop positive attitudes towards their learning. They are keen to take advantage of the range of learning experiences that are available. Many pupils concentrate for appropriate periods of time and participate well in the life of the school. Most younger pupils show good levels of motivation, curiosity and perseverance in their lessons and recall and build on their previous learning well. For example, they talk knowledgeably and passionately about Welsh culture when creating love spoons and role-playing a castle scene. Across the school, many pupils value and respond well to the verbal feedback they receive from staff and are beginning to use it successfully to improve their work when it is provided.

Most pupils understand the importance of regular exercise and have a suitable knowledge of the need for a healthy lifestyle. However, despite the school's clear messages around healthy eating, snack and drink choices at break and lunch times are often unhealthy. Pupils of all ages benefit from a suitable range of extra-curricular clubs and enrichment activities that help to develop their physical skills well. Most pupils understand how to keep safe when online. For example, older pupils explore and recognise the dangers of spam emails and the importance of strong privacy settings.

Many pupils are beginning to have a say in what and how they learn. Pupils who are members of groups such as Heddlu Bach, Criw Cymraeg and Pupil Council engage enthusiastically and enjoy sharing their ideas. However, the impact of these groups on the life and work of the school is in its infancy. Most pupils develop a good understanding of the importance of developing as ethically informed citizens through their awareness of other cultures and religions. For example, older pupils talk impressively about child labour in Ghana and develop an important understanding of self-esteem, belonging, safety and physiological needs.

As they move through the school, many pupils develop well as enterprising, creative contributors. Older pupils show good independence and determination when growing and selling vegetables as part of the school's summer fete. Pupils' enthusiastic engagement in authentic opportunities such as this helps them to develop their

knowledge and understanding of sustainability and ensures that they have a sound insight into the world of work.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

Throughout the school, staff have developed strong and compassionate relationships with the pupils in their care. This ensures that all pupils carry out their learning in an inclusive and respectful learning environment. In many classes, including the SRB, staff make creative and skilful use of classroom spaces and resources to ensure that the needs of all pupils are accounted for. In the Nursery and younger classes, teachers and support staff engage and challenge pupils effectively. Learning experiences in these classes are of good quality and encourage pupils to learn through play and discovery, for example when caring for baby dragons as part of the project about Wales.

The school is developing a clear vision for its curriculum in line with the ethos of Curriculum for Wales. In particular, teachers use the local area beneficially to enhance the curriculum. They design a beneficial range of learning activities and experiences that successfully improve pupils' understanding of the locality and their sense of belonging to the community and Wales. Pupils throughout the school, including those in the SRB, thoroughly enjoy these experiences and talk about them with delight.

Overall, the curriculum offers an appropriate range of learning experiences that engage most pupils suitably. Staff place a strong emphasis on providing a wide range of trips and visits that broaden and enrich pupils' experiences appropriately. Across the school, teachers adopt a common approach to planning the curriculum and work alongside colleagues capably to share ideas. However, this has not led to a consistent approach to the development of pupils' skills as they move through the school. Whilst teachers generally plan learning opportunities that are interesting and engaging, too often they do not enable pupils to consolidate previous learning or extend their skills well enough, particularly in the oldest classes. As a result, too many pupils do not make the progress they are capable of by the time they leave the school.

In general, teachers use questioning and assessment for learning strategies appropriately to check pupils' understanding during lessons. In the most successful instances, teachers listen carefully to pupils' responses and adjust their teaching immediately to improve pupils' learning. Many teachers provide pupils with regular written feedback on their learning. On the few occasions staff provide time for pupils to act upon their feedback they do so effectively, and this helps them to improve their work and address misconceptions. However, these opportunities are too infrequent and, as a result, pupils do not always have the chance to refine or deepen their learning. This often limits the progress pupils make over time, particularly those who are more able and require additional levels of challenge in their learning.

The SRB provides a highly effective and inclusive learning environment for pupils with social, emotional and well-being needs. Staff have created a climate for learning that excellently supports and nurtures each pupil so that they develop their confidence, kindness, and willingness to engage through a valuable range of purposeful learning experiences. Staff in the SRB plan exciting learning opportunities

for pupils to explore, practise and enhance their skills in the school's attractive outdoor environment. Similarly, mainstream foundation learning staff provide worthwhile activities for pupils to develop their creative skills, physical skills and well-being in the outdoors.

Many staff model the Welsh language effectively. They demonstrate a sense of pride in using Welsh, both during lessons and less formal times of the school day. Daily helpwr heddiw sessions support pupils suitably to improve their spoken Welsh, particularly in the younger classes. The teaching of Welsh heritage is an impressive aspect of the school's work. The provision for learning about Wales through studies such as those about Newport Castle, Yr Wyddfa and Owain Glyndwr is consistently beneficial across the school. This leads to pupils feeling proud to be a citizen of Wales.

The school benefits from a having many skilled, enthusiastic and caring support staff. Overall, they provide capable support to pupils under the guidance of class teachers and the ALN Co-ordinator. However, the school does not give sufficient attention to how it could utilise support staff more effectively to support pupils' individual learning needs, develop pupils' independence, provide more challenge in pupils' learning or to maximise the use of staff members' own expertise.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The level of care, compassion and inclusivity the school provides is a strength. Ty Sign Primary School is a caring and welcoming community where most pupils feel they are listened to and treated fairly. Relationships between staff and pupils are effective, creating a positive ethos within the school. Overall, the school environment provides a stimulating and nurturing space for pupils. This is particularly effective in the classrooms for younger pupils. In those classes, the provision is well organised and encourages pupils to flourish and develop their independence and confidence successfully.

Provision for pupils within the SRB is a highlight of the school's work. The school deploys highly skilled staff extremely well, providing effective challenge, which ensures that pupils make strong personal progress. The SRB environment is nurturing and well organised, and supports learning effectively. The school has accurately identified a need to support younger pupils who have significant needs and have purposefully responded by developing an additional class that robustly targets and supports individual pupils' needs. The provision provides pupils with a nurturing and safe environment where staff work skilfully and effectively.

The ALN Co-ordinator works closely with staff to assess pupils' needs at an early stage. Teachers and support staff have sufficient opportunities to liaise with parents, staff and external agencies. The support from outside agencies is comprehensive and aids the ALN Co-ordinator in identifying next steps for pupils. In the few instances where intervention takes place, it has a positive effective on pupils' well-being. For example, a well-being programme led by skilled staff provides invaluable support for the most vulnerable pupils. However, opportunities to match additional provision to pupils' learning needs are missed and specific, targeted and individualised support is too infrequent.



The school is an inclusive community where all pupils have equal opportunity to access all aspects of the curriculum and enrichment activities, including residential trips. Many pupils have the opportunity to contribute towards school life via the numerous pupil voice groups such as Heddlu Bach and Criw Cymraeg. However, the impact of these groups is underdeveloped at present.

The school's curriculum supports pupils particularly well to understand their identity and develop a sense of belonging to their local community and Wales as a whole. Staff provide a comprehensive range of engaging opportunities that motivate pupils and encourage them to celebrate their heritage. The school provides pupils with suitable opportunities to develop their musical and creative skills. Visitors to the school enhance the school's curriculum and many pupils benefit from the chance to play instruments and participate in dance classes.

There are valuable opportunities to become active and informed citizens and to be prepared for the world of work. For example, teachers empower pupils to organise a careers fair, which is attended by a variety of businesses, as part of their topic 'When I grow up'. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to appreciate and celebrate differences, for example through whole-school assemblies and topic work incorporating different faiths such as Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism. Assemblies encourage pupils to reflect and provide useful opportunities to develop empathy and global awareness.

Staff have successfully established clear routines and rewards systems that impact positively on most pupils' behaviour, resulting in a calm and caring environment which is conducive to learning. There are relevant procedures to promote regular attendance. However, despite its work in this area the impact is limited and attendance rates are too low.

There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. All staff access appropriate training, which ensures that pupils' welfare has a high priority. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that pupils and staff are aware of how to keep safe. The curriculum supports safeguarding appropriately. For example, pupils across the school learn how to keep safe online. Comprehensive record keeping systems are in place to ensure that any incidents are noted and these are monitored robustly by school leaders.

## **Leadership and management**

The newly appointed headteacher has quickly established positive relationships with pupils, parents, staff and governors. She is calm and considered and communicates a clear vision for the future of the school. She is competently supported by the senior leadership team who successfully ensure that the school is a safe, welcoming and inclusive place for pupils.

The governing body is supportive, reflective and passionate about the school. Governors understand their statutory obligations and ensure that policies and guidance are reviewed and revised appropriately. Governors ensure that the school has suitable procedures in place to promote healthy eating and drinking and they support the school's strong safeguarding culture well. However, they do not play a

strong enough role in holding the school to account for the progress pupils make in their learning. Too much time is allotted to supporting the school's operational work. As a result, governors do not have sufficient first-hand knowledge about the quality of teaching and learning, including the impact of poverty on pupils' progress.

The headteacher has swiftly developed an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings. However, the school's existing planning for improvement does not focus on its immediate needs well enough. Self-evaluation is not regular, robust or accurate enough to identify what the school does well and what it needs to improve. For example, leaders over time have not addressed inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Overall, staff and governors do not have sufficient opportunities to be part of self-evaluation work and as such current processes do not reflect an inclusive, developmental or beneficial approach. On the few occasions when the school has accurately identified improvements needs, staff demonstrate an ability to affect positive change. For instance, the implementation of a new phonics programme is successful in developing most younger pupils' early reading skills.

School leaders manage the budget efficiently. The governing body has good oversight of the school's finances and supports leaders well in their decision-making. Leaders have used money sensibly to establish an additional class for younger pupils with specific learning and well-being needs. This provision provides a safe, calm and engaging environment that enables pupils to make good progress in their early learning and development. However, leaders do not always make best use of support staff skills or plan their deployment across the school carefully enough. As a result, support for pupils is not always specific enough to their individual needs.

Systems and processes for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress are not consistent across the school. Standardised tests are used to record termly outcomes in some aspects of the curriculum such as reading and mathematics. However, there is not a whole-school understanding of the progress pupils should make, or the progress they are making. Work to define progression within the school's curriculum and progress in pupils' learning is underdeveloped. This hinders the extent to which teachers match their teaching to pupils' needs, particularly in the oldest classes.

All staff have access to professional learning. A few staff have undertaken regional programmes for leadership, newly qualified teachers and well-being. A very few teachers have visited other schools. Where this has taken place, staff have used these experiences well to develop strong indoor and outdoor provision in the younger classes. All staff have received appropriate safeguarding and Prevent training, which helps to ensure that the school is a safe and respectful environment for learning. However, leaders do not plan professional learning strategically and as such it does not support whole school improvements well enough. The school assists the wider teaching profession well by hosting university students each year. This arrangement is also beneficial to a few of the school's staff who receive useful training and sound opportunities for collaboration with other colleagues.

## 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](http://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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