



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

A report on

Tairgwaith Primary School

**Llwyncelyn Road
Tairgwaith
Ammanford
SA18 1UU**

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Tairgwaith Primary School

Name of provider	Tairgwaith Primary School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	none
Number of pupils on roll	104
Pupils of statutory school age	87
Number in nursery classes	11
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%)	34.1%
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%)	19.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	2.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	5.7%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/03/2016
Start date of inspection	05/02/2024

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

Tairgwaith Primary School is a happy, inclusive school that places a high priority on the well-being of its pupils. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and know who to go to if they are worried. Most pupils show good levels of interest in their lessons and enjoy the opportunities they have to improve their school as part of pupil voice groups. There is a strong emphasis on community, and families greatly appreciate the role the school plays in their lives. There is a high level of care and respect amongst pupils, staff and governors and this has a very positive influence on pupils' attitudes and behaviours.

Many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals make suitable progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers provide learning experiences that engage many pupils' interest and make good links with the local community. In a majority of lessons, teachers build progressively on what pupils know. In the best examples they plan to meet individual needs well. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Provision for teaching the skills of writing and numeracy is limited, particularly in the older classes. As a result, many older pupils do not extend or apply their writing and numeracy skills well enough or progress at the rate of which they are capable.

Staff have strong relationships with pupils. They use positive encouragement, and they praise pupils for their achievements. In a majority of cases staff provide worthwhile feedback to pupils. However overall, the feedback does not support them to identify the next steps in their learning.

Leaders work with pupils and the community to create a vision for the school's work and are addressing some national priorities such as ALN reform very well. Staff collaborate to contribute to improvement work, and they undertake some suitable monitoring activities. However, these activities do not always result in the required improvements, for example in further development of their curriculum design. Governors are very active in developing the school. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and help to ensure that it meets the many needs of its community well.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching
- R2 Improve pupils' writing and numeracy skills in the older classes
- R3 Provide effective feedback to older pupils so that they know what to do to improve their work

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at Tairgwaith Primary School many pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make good progress in their learning from their starting points. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) often make very good progress as they move through the school.

The majority of pupils start school with literacy, numeracy and social skills below those expected for their age. They settle into school life quickly and respond well to routines. Many develop the confidence to express themselves clearly, for example pupils in the nursery talk enthusiastically when making porridge in the three bears' cottage. Most pupils develop good oracy skills as they move through the school. They speak confidently to each other and are eager to talk about their learning with adults, for example younger pupils explain the properties of materials when making a shelter. By Year 6 many pupils' oracy skills have developed very well and they are able to express themselves and their ideas confidently, for example when discussing the importance of online safety older pupils listen to each other and express their ideas about how this can be improved within their school.

Overall, many pupils' reading skills develop well and by the end of school, many pupils have made good progress. Many younger pupils listen to stories with enjoyment and retell them in their own words. They recognise a range of sounds and start to read simple words and sentences. By Year 2, most pupils show enthusiasm for reading and use their knowledge of phonics to support their progress. They build words accurately and begin to read simple texts well.

As they move through the school, many pupils continue to develop their reading skills appropriately with increasing fluency and understanding. By Year 6, most pupils skim and scan for information when researching online and have a good understanding of the texts they read. They have sound inference skills, such as describing the characters from the legend Cantre'r Gwaelod, whilst using Welsh to name the characters, such as 'Y Brenin'.

Most younger pupils make good progress in their early writing skills. In nursery they develop their mark-making skills effectively through multi-sensory activities and in reception begin to write simple words. By Year 2, most pupils have developed these skills well and are writing extended sentences independently. Many pupils continue to make progress in their writing skills as they move through the school. They write persuasive speeches about the advantages of being kind as part of their 'Kindness' topic and rewrite fables in their own words. However, a minority of older pupils do not

extend or apply their writing skills well enough and do not always take pride in the presentation of their work.

Many pupils develop their number skills appropriately. The youngest pupils develop their basic knowledge of number through a range of practical activities, such as counting out the number of sticks needed to build a house for The Three Little Pigs. In younger classes, many pupils are beginning to develop suitable strategies to solve problems. Many older pupils add, subtract, divide and multiply large numbers using a range of methods effectively. However, as a result of limited opportunities, pupils do not broaden their mathematical knowledge widely enough or apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum well enough.

Most pupils develop their digital skills effectively. From an early age, pupils are confident in using digital devices to record and enhance their learning experiences, for example Year 2 use coding programmes independently to send a virtual rocket into space. As they move through the school, most pupils use their digital skills well to support their research and present their findings. Most older pupils use more complex programmes with increasing confidence and independence, for example to make lively animations to show how to mine coal in the local Amman Valley.

Most pupils develop their oracy skills in Welsh very well. The youngest pupils enjoy learning a range of Welsh songs and rhymes and playing practical games. As they progress through the school, most pupils respond confidently in Welsh when asked more complex questions as part of a conversation with visitors about their favourite lessons.

Most pupils develop valuable creative skills. Younger pupils enjoy constructing houses for The Three Little Pigs and older pupils enjoy creating paintings of Llyn Y Fan Farw Lake. Most pupils develop their physical skills well during playground activities, after school clubs and in lessons. They show control and agility appropriate to their stage of development and enjoy being active in and out of lessons.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils are proud to belong to the Tairgwaith family. Nearly all enjoy coming to school and quickly develop secure friendships and trusted relationships with all staff. As a result, they feel safe, cared for and happy. Pupils have a secure knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online and can explain how they would deal with a situation if it arose, for example older pupils make posters to remind others to tell a trusted adult if they receive an unkind message on their device.

The positive attitudes that nearly all pupils display contribute to a calm atmosphere in the school. They respond well to each other and are respectful to peers and adults. They feel that they are listened to and feel safe to ask for support when needed. They behave very well in lessons and on the yard. When moving around the school, most do so with care and consideration of others. A few pupils use a range of strategies to manage their emotions well and staff support them carefully to achieve this.

This positivity carries on into pupils' attitudes to learning. Most pupils are confident when engaging with their learning and they enjoy evaluating their own work and that

of their peers. For example, younger pupils improve their paintings by listening to their friends' suggestions that they paint their planets brighter and their backgrounds darker. Many pupils show good levels of resilience when carrying out activities and solving problems, such as rebuilding their houses from different materials when blown down by the wolf. Older pupils use co-ordinates on the yard to create and solve treasure hunts. Nearly all pupils develop their creative skills across the curriculum using a range of media and digital software to support this, for example as part of their topic exploring Welsh legends, older pupils create interesting animations to retell the story of The Devil's Bridge.

When presented with the opportunity many value the time to reflect on their learning and improve their work. In the best examples they respond to good quality verbal feedback during lessons, for example to improve the quality of their story writing. Older pupils use success criteria to support their understanding of how they can improve their work. Generally, however, older pupils do not receive feedback that focuses on important specific next steps in their learning and, as a result, have a limited knowledge of how to improve their work over time.

Most pupils enjoy their many opportunities to develop as ethical citizens, such as organising fundraising coffee mornings. They develop their awareness of global issues well through a range of contexts. For example pupils benefit from a deforestation workshop that helps them to better identify the impact of global warming on countries around the world, including changes within their own locality. Many pupils are aware of the Rights of the Child and explain how this affects them, for example, pupils confidently identify the right to be safe online. Most pupils engage well with a broad range of activities during break times as well as after school, such as the outdoor adventure club that develops their physical and problem-solving skills.

Many present themselves confidently when carrying out roles of responsibility. Pupils from a range of backgrounds are actively involved in a range of pupil voice groups, which contribute well towards the inclusive nature of the school. The school council take great pride in their roles and can explain how their work impacts on the wider community, for instance they recently supported the local food hub by encouraging donations of food.

Most pupils identify the benefits of healthy eating and drinking and talk about the importance of exercise in sustaining good health. They actively engage in opportunities to promote their fitness at school, for example they take part in a daily mile. Most pupils' physical skills develop well as they move through the school, for example nursery pupils navigate an outdoor course using bikes whilst older pupils lead Young Ambassador sports activities for younger pupils, all of which impact positively on pupil well-being.

Teaching and learning experiences

The whole school community has developed a vision that aims to support pupils to become independent and 'prepare them for a better future'. They place high importance on belonging to their community, and this influences the school's values. Leaders, teachers and support staff provide a nurturing environment where all pupils and their families, regardless of their background or circumstances, feel valued. Nearly all staff know their pupils and their families extremely well and offer a high

level of support to meet their needs. Teachers make the most of the school's outdoor environment and plan learning experiences for pupils to explore and develop new skills. For example older pupils carry out an outdoor sound walk to help create a setting for their stories and members of the school's gardening club grow vegetables.

The school is developing its curriculum design to align with the principles of Curriculum for Wales. Teachers focus learning around planned 'concepts' and are beginning to consider the ways in which areas of learning and experience will contribute to the development of pupils' knowledge and skills in relation to this. This is in its early stages and staff have not yet developed a balanced enough curriculum that ensures pupils develop the full range of skills needed. The approach to learning in mathematics, for example, focuses on pupils developing their understanding of the four operations of number in more depth. However, provision for pupils to develop their skills in a range of mathematical areas is less developed, and so overall planning for the development of pupils' skills across the curriculum in numeracy is limited.

The school has suitable arrangements for developing pupils' reading skills. Staff read aloud to pupils and act as positive role models, encouraging pupils to read for enjoyment and introducing them to new authors. They nurture pupils' enjoyment of reading successfully, and provide opportunities to develop and apply their reading skills across the curriculum. However, in the older classes, the school's provision for the development of pupils' writing skills does not always ensure that teaching builds on pupils' prior knowledge or allow them sufficient opportunities to apply their writing skills across the curriculum.

Teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and confidence in applying their digital skills across the curriculum. From an early age, adults encourage pupils to record their learning experiences on devices. As they move through the school staff plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, including creating presentations, designing posters and simple coding. Older pupils use digital animation skills to create interesting movie clips of scenes from Welsh legends.

Staff make very good use of a range of strategies to ensure that pupils with ALN can access the school's curriculum in line with their stage of development. Support staff carry out their roles in supporting pupils in their learning within the classroom well. A few support highly specialised group or one-to-one sessions. They provide sensitive and timely support, which enables pupils to engage more readily with their learning and this contributes to the school's highly inclusive approach.

The school promotes the Welsh language and heritage very well. Teachers make use of the local and wider area appropriately to support pupils' learning through trips and residential opportunities. For example, pupils visit a local coal tip as part of their 'Belonging to Tairgwaith' topic. Older pupils research the history of the school badge and are provided with opportunities to interview local residents who have mined in the village to give them first-hand experiences and explore the meaning behind the logos. The school's provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language builds well on their existing knowledge and skills. Teachers use daily sessions to help develop pupils' fluency in language patterns and provide fun and engaging opportunities to practice these skills.

Staff establish positive working relationships with pupils and manage behaviour well. This creates a good working environment and allows pupils to feel confident that they can ask questions and request help with their learning. This reflects the warm and supportive ethos of the school. Where teaching is most effective, learning objectives are clear, teachers share worthwhile success criteria and make valuable links to prior learning. During these sessions teachers and support staff make good use of questioning to challenge and extend pupils' understanding and encourage them to present their learning in a variety of ways. Teachers in older classes have good subject knowledge and in the best examples use effective questioning strategies to assess pupils' understanding. However, the quality and effectiveness of teaching varies across the school overall. Teachers in the older classes do not always plan an effective range of learning experiences to stimulate and challenge all pupils.

A majority of teachers and support staff provide pupils with valuable verbal feedback during lessons that supports pupils to move forward appropriately in their learning. Where this feedback is effective teachers engage in dialogue with pupils to help them think about their learning, what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. Older pupils use success criteria to assess their own and others' work appropriately. However, staff do not always ensure they fully understand the purpose of their learning or their next steps.

Care, support and guidance

Everyone in the Tairgwaith school community is committed to maintaining the warm and nurturing environment where pupil well-being is at the heart of everything it does. Staff have positive and respectful relationships with pupils, parents and carers and provide timely support to meet their needs. This contributes to pupils' confidence and self-esteem and encourages good behaviour. The school promotes a culture of inclusivity and puts in place a wide range of support to ensure that pupils make progress.

The school provides very effective support for pupils with ALN. The ALN Co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils with additional needs in the school. Skilled support staff understand their responsibilities in supporting these pupils, including those with complex needs. The procedures in place to identify needs, provide support and intervention and review progress mean that most pupils with additional needs make at least their expected progress as they move through the school. Individual Development Plans are written in collaboration with pupils, staff and parents to ensure that pupils receive a high level of support and make good progress. The school works successfully with its partner agencies to further support pupils and their families. It has strong links with local schools and makes good use of this through the cluster ALN forum.

The school supports pupils from all backgrounds to engage in a range of active pupil voice and leadership groups. Staff ensure that pupils are involved in important aspects of school life, such as contributing to the school's vision and delivering assemblies on internet safety. The Cops Cymreig are an important part of developing an enjoyment of using Welsh language at the school, for instance they teach and lead Welsh games on the playground. The school's eco group organises litter picks in the local community and pupils have opportunities to be involved in fundraising

events, such as coffee mornings. These opportunities impact positively on pupils' leadership skills and confidence.

The school encourages pupils to engage with a range of opportunities that promote their awareness of local heritage, Welsh culture and the diverse nature of Wales. These are celebrated throughout the school, for example interactive displays provide access to artefacts that foster an interest in the local mining history of Tairgwaith as part of their topic 'Belonging'. The school ensures that pupils explore and understand a range of faiths and cultures through assemblies and topic work. For instance pupils explore the Christian Harvest Festival during their work on 'Kindness', and older pupils learn about the Hindu festival of Diwali.

Staff ensure that pupils collaborate with others and enjoy experiences outside of school, for example pupils attend an outdoor adventure residential trip that helps to develop their teambuilding and leadership skills. They perform in collaboration with other local schools during a Holocaust Memorial Service and, as part of Remembrance Day, pupils make and sell poppies to local residents and represent the school by laying crosses at the War Memorial. This helps to reinforce the pupils' sense of belonging to the community and develops their confidence.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to attend clubs during breaks, lunchtimes and after school. These are very well attended by pupils from all backgrounds. The clubs are varied and include outdoor adventure, brick construction, performing arts, dance and football. The school runs both girls and boys football teams and provides opportunities for them to compete, for instance the girls' team play in Swansea City tournaments.

The school has effective procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance and dealing with absences. It works closely with parents and carers to support the attendance of vulnerable pupils. The school has a robust safeguarding culture and their arrangements to safeguard pupils give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

Leaders work very successfully with the community to establish a supportive culture where pupils feel safe, happy and cared for. As a result, pupils are calm, respectful and well-behaved. Leaders ensure strong and purposeful links with the wider community that benefit the pupils and their families. Together they have created a shared vision that takes into account the needs and views of all.

The school's work in partnership with parents is very beneficial to the pupils and is a strength of the school. Families value and appreciate the support and guidance provided by staff in order to support their children. This reciprocal relationship is based on the considerable trust of parents that the school acts in the best interests of the pupils. The school uses a range of measures to address the impact of poverty and provide pupils with learning experiences that will enhance their well-being and support them to develop new skills and interests, such as individual brass instrument lessons and team building residential trips.

Leaders are at varying stages of addressing national priorities. The school has successfully implemented recent Welsh Government ALN reforms and provides

timely and supportive interventions and support for pupils and their families. The ALN Coordinator has attended a useful range of professional learning on the reforms and, as a result, has a strong understanding of this area of the school's work. Leaders work diligently to evaluate and improve the school's provision for pupils with ALN. The school is at an earlier stage of implementing Curriculum for Wales. Leaders have been trialling different ways of planning for and delivering the curriculum and the school has taken time to identify the aspects and organisation of the curriculum that work best for them. For instance, leaders and staff are currently reviewing and improving the curriculum for mathematics and are working collaboratively to ensure that their curriculum has sufficient breadth and balance. However, this is at an early stage of development.

Leaders undertake suitable self-evaluation activities. In the best examples, they use the information they gather to identify opportunities for improvement, for example they identify weaknesses in specific areas of pupils' skills such as their understanding of number. However, in general, leaders do not focus sharply enough on evaluating the difference that teaching and learning experiences make to pupils' progress. This means that they have missed some areas for improvement, such as inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the lack of breadth in the provision of pupils' mathematical and writing skills.

Leaders ensure that most staff understand and carry out their roles effectively. There are a few opportunities for staff to develop their teaching skills and to observe good practice within the local cluster of schools. Staff receive a range of professional learning opportunities to develop their knowledge of supporting pupils with ALN. However, the professional learning opportunities that a few staff receive are not tailored well enough to their individual needs to support them to make the necessary improvements to their teaching.

Governors contribute well to the school's work and take pride in their roles. They are regular visitors to the school where they play a very active role. They have a good understanding of the school's improvement initiatives and are particularly involved in the school's work on building connections with the community and the pupils' sense of belonging. Their role in evaluating the school's progress in relation to its improvement priorities and in challenging school leaders is developing appropriately. They support leaders to monitor and use financial resources including grant funding, effectively. For example, they deploy the pupil development grant successfully to fund intervention programmes to improve pupils' reading skills. Governors ensure that there are suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking and work well with leaders to contribute to the school's robust safeguarding culture.

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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