



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

A report on

Coedpenmaen County Primary School

**Coedpenmaen Close
Pontypridd
RCT
CF37 4LE**

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

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

About Coedpenmaen County Primary School

Name of provider	Coedpenmaen County 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	263
Pupils of statutory school age	225
Number in nursery classes	25
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 21.3%)	17%
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 22.2%)	28.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	3.1%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	January 2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/04/2012
Start date of inspection	23/05/2022

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

Most pupils at the school behave well and are polite and well mannered. Many make suitable progress as they move through the school and by the time they leave have appropriate skills in literacy and numeracy. However, around half of pupils are not enthusiastic about the learning experiences that the school provides and they do not enjoy learning.

The school has experienced a period of instability in leadership. The newly appointed leadership team has begun to implement change, for example improving safeguarding procedures and the security of the site and improving relationships with parents. However, the school's evaluation and improvement planning processes are not sufficiently robust and do not identify the most important shortcomings that leaders and teachers need to address. Members of the school's governing body do not provide effective support and challenge to the school's leaders.

Teachers and leaders have focused appropriately on pupils' well-being as they return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers and teaching assistants deliver a good range of interventions to support pupils' emotional and mental health and this is having a positive impact on pupils' well-being. The support for pupils with additional learning needs is strong.

The well-being of staff has been affected negatively by the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in leadership during the past two years. Teachers do not collaborate well together or share their expertise willingly. This has made it difficult to address national priorities such as planning to implement the Curriculum for Wales. As a result, this work is at a very early stage of development.

The high number of pupils, the ratio of teachers to pupils and the overcrowded teaching areas in the classes for younger pupils makes it difficult for teachers to deliver learning experiences that match the needs and ability of these pupils.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the effectiveness of leadership at all levels, including that of the governing body
- R2 Develop stronger collaborative working arrangements between staff
- R3 Improve self-evaluation and improvement processes
- R4 Ensure that teachers match teaching and learning opportunities closely to pupils' needs
- R5 Ensure that the school is prepared for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales
- R6 Ensure that the organisation of the classing structure of the school meets the needs of all pupils and enables pupils to access the learning experiences that are required for their age and ability

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. 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 on a termly basis.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at Coedpenmaen Primary School, many pupils make appropriate progress from their individual starting points. Most pupils with additional learning needs who take part in interventions to support their learning make good progress.

At the start of their school life, many pupils in the nursery and reception class listen well to the adults they are working with. They enjoy their tasks and make choices about the activities they undertake. Many speak clearly when talking to adults, for example when looking at a book about a dragon growing in size. They make appropriate vocabulary choices, for example using words such as birthday, presents and cake when writing invitations to a party. Many are beginning to form letters and numbers accurately and to write familiar words such as their name. They develop appropriate number skills. They use these skills well in their activities, for example adding a set number of gems to a crown that they are making for the Queen.

Many pupils in all year groups listen well to adults and to each other. Pupils throughout the school have suitable speaking skills. Many younger pupils speak confidently, for example when describing how they used a computer program to create a postage stamp to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. Older pupils express themselves clearly, when preparing for a debate about the benefits and drawbacks of wearing a school uniform and explaining why they prefer the work of artists Henri Rousseau or Kyffin Williams.

Pupils make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills in many cases. Younger pupils listen to adults speaking using familiar words and phrases and respond to these appropriately. In Year 3, pupils talk in pairs about where they live, using vocabulary such as castell, palas, cwch, tŷ teras, tŷ pâr. A few extend their sentences to include the name of their town. Older pupils read aloud from simple texts about the countries they would like to visit using appropriate pronunciation.

As they progress through the school, most pupils develop appropriate reading skills. Younger readers acquire an understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds and use this knowledge well to help them to read. In Year 3, many pupils read with good understanding, for example when finding out about Roman gods. A few older pupils express preferences for favourite texts and authors, however around half do not enjoy reading. Many older readers read at an appropriate level for their age but their knowledge of reading strategies to help them read new or unfamiliar vocabulary is underdeveloped.

Many pupils make suitable progress with writing. Younger pupils begin to form letters and spell simple words accurately. In Year 2, pupils write in sentences using full stops and capital letters, for example when writing effective newspaper accounts about Humpty's Big Fall. Older pupils write appropriately in a range of styles including scriptwriting and character descriptions. More able writers structure their writing well, for example using paragraphs appropriately when re-telling the story of St Dwynwen. These pupils make good vocabulary choices using words such as devastated and consequence.

Many pupils develop suitable mathematics skills as they progress through the school. Younger pupils have sound number skills and find fractions of a whole. Older pupils plot co-ordinates in four quadrants, convert fractions to percentages and begin to use algebraic formulations. However, most of their mathematics is carried out using worksheets and this hinders their opportunities to develop independence, for example about choosing methods for calculations.

Pupils ICT skills are limited. In Year 2 pupils use the school's digital platform to upload photographs. Older pupils prepare presentations about aspects of their topic work, for example about Orang Utans. They import images and use word art to embellish presentations and use internet search engines to find information. However, pupils repeat these skills to the same standard as they move through the school and therefore show little progress in this aspect of their learning.

A majority of pupils develop effective creative skills. Pupils in Year 3 create vibrant art work in the style of the Brazilian artist Romero Britto and pupils in Year 6 paint landscapes after studying the work of Welsh artist Kyffin Williams. Pupils in Year 4 take part in music lessons using drums and tambourines that develop their understanding of musical techniques and terms such as tempo and dynamic.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils are considerate and treat one another, staff and visitors with respect. Many pupils feel safe in school and most behave well.

Around half of pupils, show positive attitudes towards their work. These pupils engage purposefully in their lessons and discuss their work enthusiastically, for example when finding out about the impact of palm oil deforestation. Younger pupils tend to engage with their learning more positively and concentrate on tasks more effectively than older pupils. Around half of older pupils lack interest in their school work and are not motivated to complete the tasks and activities provided for them. These pupils spend time either distracting others from their tasks or sitting passively, not engaging with the planned learning experiences.

Most pupils listen appropriately to the ideas and opinions of their peers, for example when discussing different strategies that pupils may use to communicate such as British sign language. Older pupils know that respecting the opinions and thoughts of others is an important life skill. From an early age, most pupils develop a clear understanding of why it is important to agree and follow shared rules. During collective worship, older pupils share their thoughts and emotions naturally and confidently, for example through prayer.

A majority of pupils are starting to develop their awareness of the need to help other people, for example by raising funds for local charities. Many older pupils show an understanding of fairness and equality, for example when talking about children whose lives are very different from their own. Pupils have recently re-connected online with pupils in a school in Mbale, Uganda. Pupils from both schools have recorded and shared videos showing their schools. This work has helped to enhance pupils understanding of other cultures.

Pupils in leadership roles, such as the Senedd, are proud of their school and are beginning to think about the difference they can make to it. These roles have only been recently re-established and the impact that pupils have made so far is limited. Pupils in Year 6 spend valuable time with younger pupils, for example helping them with their Welsh games. This helps to develop sound friendships and has a positive effect on the younger pupils' confidence and older pupils' sense of responsibility.

Pupils understand the importance of regular exercise to achieve a healthy life and have a suitable knowledge of the importance of eating healthy snacks however around half of pupils bring unsuitable snacks to school including crisps and squash. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of how to keep safe online, for example they are aware that there may be inappropriate material on the internet

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

The quality of teaching across the school varies too much. In around half of lessons, teachers engage pupils well, lessons move at a good pace and pupils are actively involved in learning. In these lessons, teachers question pupils skilfully to check their understanding or to extend their thinking. A few teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan and deliver lessons in which pupils can develop their creativity, particularly in music and art. Many teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils in class and when delivering intervention programmes.

A few teachers match learning opportunities well to pupils' abilities. For example, teachers and teaching assistants deliver effective phonic sessions to groups of younger pupils that are at the appropriate stage of phonic development. However, throughout the school, many teachers do not adapt work well enough to meet the needs of all pupils, including those who are more able. For example, in reading activities, teachers provide all pupils in the class with the same text even though their reading abilities vary. As a result, tasks do not challenge able pupils well enough or provide sufficient support for pupils who read less well. This hampers the progress of these pupils who lose interest in the task.

In many areas of the curriculum teachers overuse worksheets, particularly in mathematics and topic work. In a few classes teachers provide older pupils with tasks and activities that do not provide sufficient challenge or extend their learning. Where this happens, pupils disengage from their tasks and waste valuable learning time. Overall, teachers are not paying sufficient attention to the learning and progress they expect pupils to make.

Most teachers implement a few strategies to help pupils understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. A few teachers are starting to do this effectively in writing, for example by identifying the features of different texts. However, other strategies that teachers use such as the use of smiley faces or providing pupils with answer sheets in mathematics do not focus well enough on the next steps in learning for pupils.

The Year 1 and 2 class has too many pupils for one teacher. The classroom is too small to accommodate these pupils who often have to work in areas of the school such as the school hall, which are not appropriate to the pupils' stage of development or needs. As a result, much of the learning, particularly in the morning, is directed by adults and provision does not always enable pupils to access or select their own resources and develop their independence.

Teachers and leaders do not have a shared vision for the curriculum and plans to implement the Curriculum for Wales are at an early stage of development. This year, teachers are re-evaluating topics to engage and interest pupils. These include Topics on Invaders and Rainforests. Teachers start these topics with activities that aim to generate enthusiasm, for example a visit to school from a cosmetics company to talk about sustainability and the dangers of the overuse of palm oil for the environment. Teachers are beginning to involve pupils in choosing aspects of the topic that they would like to learn about. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 identify questions that they want to find out about in their Summer Sensations topic. However leaders and teachers have not planned for the curriculum beyond this term and as a result the curriculum does not currently build pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills systematically to ensure that they make good progress as they move through the school.

Care, support and guidance

The school's support for with additional learning needs is strong. Staff use pupil tracking information effectively to identify and plan provision to address the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. This helps to ensure that pupils with educational, emotional, social or health needs receive the provision and intervention that suits them best. Confident and knowledgeable teaching assistants deliver a valuable range of intervention programmes to support the development of pupils' academic and emotional skills. Staff pay close attention to the feelings of pupils and plan effective approaches if they have concerns. For example, regular staff check-ins with pupils prove valuable in ensuring that staff promptly identify and respond to issues with pupils' well-being as they arise. The school has recently introduced a programme to develop pupils' empathy skills. This work helps pupils to talk about their feelings and use effective strategies to regulate their emotions. Staff working with pupils with additional needs have established good working relationships with the families of these pupils.

The school makes good provision for pupils who need social and emotional support. Pupils needing support of this nature access a quiet and private space in which they know adults will listen well to their thoughts and feelings and offer a range of strategies to help. For example, pupils who have found the return to school following the pandemic challenging are given the opportunity to enter the school building by a quiet route and spend time with a trusted adult before feeling secure enough to move to their classroom.

Many teachers and teaching assistants ensure that the school is a place where pupils feel safe and secure. These create an inclusive ethos with mutual respect and trust between individual adults and the pupils they work with. However, during the inspection a very few adults spoke to pupils in a sharp and inappropriate manner. This was observed both in lesson time and during the lunch break.

Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness and understanding of religion during classroom activities and collective worship. These include assemblies that focus on aspects of Christianity such as the Ascension and learning about the Islamic religion in lessons. The curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to focus on important values, such as honesty, fairness and justice, for example through pupils engaging in discussion work using a programme to develop empathy and learning about the impact of historical figures such as Rosa Parks.

The school helps pupils to develop an understanding of inequality and diversity in society, for example through engaging with the work of Pont, a local charity that works to tackle poverty in Eastern Uganda.

The headteacher has worked successfully to ensure that the school's safeguarding processes are robust and that all pupils are safe in the school environment. She has improved the site security and processes for visitors entering the school. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to understand how to keep safe online. For example, the police liaison officer has helped pupils in Year 6 to learn about cyber bullying.

The school has sound processes in place to monitor pupil attendance and a good relationship with the attendance welfare team to support the families of pupils whose attendance needs to improve. Pupils in the Senedd have been given responsibility for implementing an initiative to improve attendance across the school and this is helping all pupils to understand the importance of being in school regularly.

Leadership and management

Since taking up her role in January 2022, the headteacher has focused appropriately on a few of the specific aspects of the school that need improvement. These include aspects of safeguarding and improving the opportunities that pupils have to take on responsibility within the school, for example through belonging to the school's Senedd. Following the full return to school for pupils following the pandemic, leaders focused effectively on pupil well-being. This work included supporting children and families who need additional help and developing strategies for pupils who have found the return to school difficult. As a result of this work, the well-being of many pupils has improved, and fewer pupils are reluctant to attend school regularly.

The school has experienced a period of instability in leadership. Over time, different leaders have had different priorities for the school and different expectations of staff. This has resulted in a lack of clarity for staff who have started initiatives with one leader that have then been changed by another. These changes have not supported a coherent approach to teaching and learning or a purposeful collaborative working environment. In addition they have led to low staff morale and poor levels of well-being for some staff members.

Staff have recently reviewed and adapted the way the school teaches phonics. As a result, staff are better able to deliver this aspect of the curriculum and pupils now use phonic skills more effectively to help them to read and write. Leaders hold valuable pupil progress meetings with teachers and are beginning to establish purposeful progress tracking procedures. However, overall the school does not have an

appropriate focus for evaluating the quality of its work. Self-evaluation activities are not suitably robust, and leaders have not focused sufficiently well on the most important areas for improvement such as the progression of pupils' skills and the standards achieved by pupils. In the most recent monitoring activities, leaders do not identify priorities well enough, for example focusing on less important matters such as how books and worksheets are presented, rather than on the aspects of teaching and learning that require improvement. Not all staff are involved in monitoring activities, and this has resulted in many staff not feeling that they are part of the school's self-evaluation and school improvement processes.

School improvement planning has too many priorities with insufficient time allocations to complete the work planned. The criteria for measuring the progress made against these priorities is not sharp enough and this makes it difficult for leaders to evaluate what has been achieved. Over time, leaders have not been successful in bringing about improvements in important aspects of the school's work. For example issues identified in previous inspections such as improving the work of the governing body and adapting work to meet the needs of all pupils remain priorities for the school.

The headteacher is leading the work to implement the Curriculum for Wales. Staff have been given appropriate responsibilities and are beginning to work in curriculum teams to discuss how they may plan new learning experiences for pupils. However, the work to develop the curriculum is at a very early stage.

Opportunities for staff to take part in professional learning activities are limited. Teachers have been unable to visit other schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic and arrangements to share good practice within the school are underdeveloped. For example, individual teachers are skilled in teaching aspects of the curriculum including Welsh and music but these skills are not shared outside their own classrooms. Teachers have recently received training on a writing programme from the regional consortium and a majority of teachers are trialling approaches from this programme in their classrooms. This work is at an early stage of development but there is emerging evidence of impact on younger pupils' writing skills. Over time, performance management procedures do not link well with the school's priorities. However, since taking up her post the headteacher has introduced a whole school writing objective for teaching staff.

Financial resources are generally managed well. Leaders use the pupil development grant to fund a suitable range of interventions including those that support pupils with emotional difficulties.

The headteacher has improved communication with parents and has increased the use of online systems that support the interaction between teachers and families. This has helped to improve relationships between parents and school leaders and improved the process for parents to approach school leaders to discuss issues or concerns that they may have about their children.

The role of the governing body in supporting and challenging the work of the school is weak. Members of the governing body do not have a good enough knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement and, as a result, governors do not provide appropriate challenge or support to the school's

leaders. The school does not have appropriate arrangements in place to support healthy eating and drinking.

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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