



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

A report on
Richmond Park Primary School

**Priory Street
Carmarthen
Carmarthenshire
SA31 1HF**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Richmond Park Primary School

Name of provider	Richmond Park Primary School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	210
Pupils of statutory school age	144
Number in nursery classes	35
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%)	34.7%
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%)	55.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	13.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	October 2013
Start date of inspection	13/06/2022

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

School leaders have developed a positive culture of teamwork amongst the staff and the local community. They ensure that pupils are cared for and provide valuable support for families. This is important because of the wide range of needs and the high levels of mobility of families within the community and the school. However, leaders have not monitored the schools work carefully enough. As a result, they have not ensured that teachers have high enough expectations for pupils' learning and progress. Too much teaching and too many of the learning experiences provided do not support pupils to make the progress they are capable of making. Leaders have not addressed this vital aspect of the school's work well enough.

Pupils at Richmond Park Primary School behave well. They treat each other fairly and with respect. Across the school pupils develop positive working relationships with adults and trust them to act in their best interests at all times. The school welcomes learners from the local area and wider world and ensures that they develop a strong sense of belonging to the school community.

When the youngest pupils join the school, they often need a lot of support to learn. The school meets their needs successfully so that after a relatively short time in school, they enjoy learning and begin to make good progress in most aspects of their development. Pupils with additional learning needs do well at school. They make strong progress towards their individual learning goals. This is due to the thoughtful, skilful and effective work of the adults that support them through intervention programmes and in the school's specialist class, Dosbarth Dyfed.

As pupils move through the school the pace of their development as learners slows. Overall, they do not make enough progress in developing their skills knowledge and understanding. This is because teaching and the learning experiences provided, particularly from Year 3 to Year 6, do not support or challenge pupils well enough to make the progress they are capable of making.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve leadership and ensure that evaluation processes focus on identifying the difference that teaching and learning experiences make to pupils' progress
- R2 Improve teaching and assessment, particularly from Year 3 to Year 6
- R3 Improve the curriculum and provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills
- R4 Address the safeguarding issue that was identified during the inspection

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

When they first join the school, many pupils have skills, knowledge and understanding that are lower than would normally be expected for their age. These youngest pupils settle well to learning and make sound progress in developing their skills and positive attitudes as learners. They sustain this progress in most aspects of learning throughout Year 1 and Year 2. Overall, pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 make limited progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding. This is a result of the lack of challenge in lessons and activities and the failure of leaders to identify issues in the quality of teaching.

Pupils with additional learning needs make consistent progress in relation to their individual learning goals. For example, pupils in Dosbarth Dyfed, the school's specialist resource class, make good progress with developing their communication skills. They gain confidence to communicate with their peers and adults. Pupils that join the school from nations across the world settle into school life quickly and make swift progress as learners and in speaking English.

Pupils in nursery and reception engage well with learning experiences. They are keen and confident to try new things out, both indoors and when learning outside. They take measured risks, for example to develop their physical skills when riding balance bikes. They co-operate well with friends, for instance to solve problems such as how to transport a ball through a tube. They select resources independently and maintain interest in activities for extended periods.

Most pupils from nursery to Year 2 develop effective communication skills. They speak confidently, for example to explain how they have combined numbers to form a total. They make suitable progress in understanding and beginning to use Welsh. By Year 2, many pupils use Welsh independently as part of their creative work, for example to perform a song about healthy eating. Individual pupils use Makaton successfully to communicate their feelings or to follow instructions.

A majority of pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 use their speaking skills appropriately to present their learning, for instance within digital presentations to describe features of Carmarthen to children in America. Overall, pupils within this age range make limited progress in speaking Welsh. They do not use the Welsh language enthusiastically, confidently or with sufficient independence.

Pupils from nursery to Year 2 make appropriate progress with their early writing skills. The youngest pupils start off with simple mark making using fingers and gradually move on to using implements such as twigs to make marks in sand. Over time this develops into forming recognisable letters and words, which they begin to present as sentences, for instance to compose verse. However, opportunities for these pupils to write independently are infrequent. From Year 3 to Year 6, the development of pupils' writing skills is limited by teachers' expectations and the range of opportunities they have. This is particularly evident in independent tasks, when for example pupils are asked to write very basic lists of instructions, such as how to inflate a balloon. This type of activity is repeated across the age range with too much

regularity. Teachers do not ensure that pupils' written work develops progressively over time. As a result, the content and grammatical accuracy of pupils' writing are too variable. When given the opportunity a few pupils produce good written work, for instance when they write for authentic purposes such as to attract visitors to Carmarthen.

Many pupils from nursery to Year 2 develop positive attitudes to books and reading. They enjoy listening to stories and sharing a book with friends. Over time, they develop suitable strategies to read simple text successfully. By Year 6, a majority of pupils have appropriate reading skills. They read fluently with suitable expression and understanding. They describe the role of characters in stories, recount events well and make sensible predictions about what might happen next. However, overall, pupils do not develop a broad enough range of strategies to read effectively to support their learning. This is related to the quality of provision, which is not demanding enough. Pupils spend too much time on low level comprehension tasks rather than developing skills such as inference, deduction or the capacity to summarise texts.

By Year 2, many pupils make sound progress in developing their number skills. They use physical resources well to count and add numbers. Over time, they extend their knowledge to create written number sentences for addition and subtraction. Most pupils recognise and name two-dimensional shapes and develop a basic understanding of symmetry. Individual pupils estimate appropriately using non-standard measures, for example how many shells or beads they will need to balance a piece of fruit. From Year 3 to Year 6, a majority of pupils make suitable progress in developing their basic mathematical skills. More able pupils work appropriately with number and use a variety of approaches to perform calculations such as long multiplication. They apply a few skills well independently, for example to work out percentages of totals. Overall, pupils do not develop their numerical reasoning skills well enough due to lack of opportunity. For example, they extract basic information from graphs but rarely analyse or interpret data in any detail.

Across the school and particularly from Year 3 to Year 6, most pupils make appropriate progress in developing their digital skills. They use coding successfully in a variety of contexts and develop a suitable understanding of how to record and present data. More able pupils use skills in combination successfully. For example, they incorporate text, graphics and their written work into their presentations. Most pupils make appropriate progress with developing their creative skills, for example through producing artwork in the style of Ruth Jen Evans and Gareth Jenks.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils behave well at school and are kind and respectful to adults and to other pupils. They feel included in the life and work of the school. Most pupils know how to stay safe online and can explain why this is important.

Nearly all pupils feel cared for at school and know that they can easily turn to someone should they be worried about anything. They make regular use of an app where they safely express their feelings, if they choose to, during the school day. Those pupils who need extra help to manage their emotions make good progress in

this aspect of their development. They benefit well from the range of support they receive.

The Cymuned Croeso is made up of pupils who have recently joined the school. They develop a sense of belonging to and pride in their school, quickly. They perform their role well; for example, they relish the responsibility of showing visitors around the school having benefited from a similar experience when they were first arrived at school. Other groups such as the sports ambassadors support younger pupils to enjoy active play at breaktimes. They also work to improve the involvement of pupils with disabilities in breaktime activities. Through their interactions with the learning environment and experiences, younger pupils show adults how and what they would like to learn. Pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 are beginning to make basic contributions to their learning. However, they do not make choices about what and how they learn or choose how they would like to present their work regularly.

There are special days to celebrate rights and diversity and the different languages spoken at the school. Nearly all pupils enjoy taking part in these occasions. Pupils from diverse backgrounds value the fact that, regardless of their characteristics or beliefs, everyone is treated the same by adults and pupils. Pupils explore diversity successfully as a part of their learning. For example, pupils have recently written a new multi-faith school prayer, which includes everyone.

Most pupils have a strong awareness of how to keep healthy and fit. They talk knowledgeably about the importance of healthy eating and drinking. For example, pupils in Year 2 identify how many grams of sugar are in different drinks and experiment to see what happens when an egg is put into cola. They were horrified by way the colour of the egg had changed overnight and can now explain why sugary drinks are bad for their teeth. Most choose to brush their teeth during the school day.

Many pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment in their learning, particularly from nursery to Year 2. In a few instances, pupils develop perseverance through problem solving activities, for example when constructing a den. Whilst pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 often remain on task compliantly, too frequently, they become passive in their learning due to a lack of challenge. They do not develop their resilience and perseverance well enough, due to a lack of opportunities provided.

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

Across the school staff establish and maintain positive relationships with pupils. They collaborate well as a team and manage pupils' behaviour sensitively. However, teaching and learning experiences, particularly for pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 do not ensure good enough rates of progress. Too often, teachers focus on planning activities that occupy pupils rather than on identifying what they really need to learn.

The curriculum and teaching from nursery to Year 2 meets the needs of pupils well overall and supports them to make strong progress, often from low starting points when they first join the school. Staff have a secure understanding of the needs and interests of pupils and use this well to set out their provision and to plan learning experiences.

Provision to develop younger pupils' personal and social, language and communication, numeracy and digital skills is effective. Teachers and support staff support learning skillfully through a well-balanced combination of focused teaching and opportunities to play and learn through experiences. Resources, tasks and the learning environment engage and sustain pupils' interest well. Staff utilise the outdoors well, for example to support pupils' physical development. The school's approach ensures that nearly all pupils in nursery to Year 2 develop positive attitudes to learning and make good overall progress, from their individual starting points.

Staff working with pupils from nursery to Year 2 generally have good subject knowledge. For example, they understand how to develop younger pupils' number and aspects of their early writing skills progressively. They model learning and play effectively and ensure that contexts for learning, such as a healthy eating topic and a role play shop, relate well to pupils' interests and experiences. Staff use strategies to support pupils that find communication challenging sensitively and effectively. They support pupils to engage purposefully in learning experiences. However, staff do not always take full advantage of opportunities to extend pupils' understanding through questioning and in a few instances, pupils' development as independent learners is lessened because adults provide too much support or structure.

Learning experiences for pupils in Dosbarth Dyfed are stimulating and engaging. Interactive sessions provide rich opportunities for pupils to be curious, develop their physical skills and interact with their peers and staff to develop their personal and social skills.

Across the school, provision to develop pupils' digital skills is appropriate. From Year 3 to Year 6 pupils often have opportunities to use a variety of skills in combination, for example as part of their digital presentations. In a few instances, teachers match the level of challenge within these digital tasks to pupils' ability well, for instance in coding activities. Pupils respond enthusiastically to digital challenges. They received recognition for their work to present a digital interpretation of Carmarthen.

The curriculum for pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 provides a suitable menu of interesting topics for pupils. Most topics draw successfully on the heritage of the school's locality. For example, teachers create opportunities for pupils to learn about the history of the River Towy through the 'Coracle' project. Teachers use engaging hooks to entice pupils to want to learn, for example when launching a new topic about the Celts. They seek out a few valuable opportunities to enrich creative experiences, for instance through the involvement of local graffiti artist Steve Jenks. Pupils have replicated his work and engaged in debates as to whether graffiti is art or vandalism. The school has recently reintroduced educational visits. Trips to places such as Castell Henllys and Carmarthen Castle enhance learning experiences successfully.

Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about and celebrate different cultures, faiths and diversity. They incorporate culture and diversity into their teaching appropriately, for example by using the birth country of members of their class as a stimulus for learning about different religions and enjoy opportunities to make and try foods from around the world. Through the curriculum, pupils have regular opportunities to learn about how to lead healthy and active lifestyles.

Although the curriculum for pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 provides a few interesting contexts for learning, teachers' delivery of it does not ensure that pupils build well enough on their previous skills, knowledge and understanding. Currently, there is not a clear understanding of how the curriculum fits together as a coherent learning journey. Too much curriculum time is spent on low level activities such as colouring or writing basic lists. These activities fill time, lack purpose and do little to motivate pupils or to move them on in their learning. In general, teachers do not have high enough expectations for pupils' progress or ensure that pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and Welsh language skills progressively in lessons and over time. Due to these shortcomings the pace of learning is too slow.

The school's approach to presenting a graduated level of challenge to pupils does not meet needs effectively enough. Written and verbal feedback is often overly positive and does not support pupils to improve. Teachers use questioning appropriately, for example as part of their introduction to lessons. However, they do not use questioning well enough to deepen or extend learning. Overall, teachers are not always clear about what they want pupils to learn. Current arrangements to organise learning experiences and to develop pupils as independent learners are not working well. As a result, pupils across the ability range from Year 3 to Year 6 do not make the progress they are capable of making.

Care, support and guidance

The school provides effective care, support and guidance for pupils, their families and members of staff. Staff promote kindness and respect successfully amongst pupils and the wider community. This was particularly important during the recent pandemic. Since returning to school, staff have continued to prioritise the well-being of their pupils and provide valuable support to enable them to participate in learning. Pupils in Dosbarth Dyfed are exceptionally well cared for by staff who have the very best interests of each pupil at the heart of what they do. This informs their well-considered decisions about provision and support.

Staff work hard to establish and support strong working relationships with parents. For example, they use webinars and quizzes to engage parents in the learning experiences of pupils. This encourages parents to take an active role in their child's learning and development. In addition, staff lead useful online workshops to develop parents' capacity to support their children. These include sessions on how the school teaches phonics and reading.

The school has recently been identified as a place of sanctuary for all in recognition of the work that staff have done to provide a safe and nurturing space for pupils. Spaces such as the 'Cwtsh' and 'Secret Garden' offer valuable provision for learners to improve their well-being in safe and calm places.

The school is an inclusive community that welcomes pupils from all parts of the world and supports them to settle in quickly and develop a sense of belonging. Assemblies about different religions promote pupils' awareness and understanding of other faiths and cultures successfully. Members of staff encourage pupils to consider the views of others sensitively, to acknowledge and respect diversity and nurture an understanding of the importance of values such as tolerance. Parents recognise and value the way pupils embrace those from different cultures and nationalities so that everyone feels included. As a result, most pupils that are new to the English language when they join the school make good progress over time.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is a strength of the school. Highly capable staff deliver a wide range of interventions which make a positive and lasting change to pupils' wellbeing and their ability to learn and thrive. As a result, by the end of Year 6 most pupils requiring additional support make good progress towards individual goals. The school has effective procedures to identify and meet pupils' additional needs. Its work with a wide range of external agencies is beneficial. Regular review meetings focus appropriately on what is working well and what could be working better to support pupils to make progress.

Throughout the school, staff provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to understand the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. There are ample opportunities for pupils to engage in sports, outside activities and physical play. For example, pupils in the nursery and reception class enjoy being able to climb trees and swing from the bars in their outdoor play area. Recently, the school has re-introduced trips and visits for pupils to support the curriculum and help to create excitement and engage pupils in their learning. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop as active citizens through their roles in a variety of pupil voice groups.

The school has a comprehensive range of strategies and processes to promote and monitor attendance. Persistent absenteeism is monitored and addressed effectively.

The school has a strong overall safeguarding culture. Staff show a high level of commitment to keeping learners safe through the ethos they promote and the learning experiences they provide. However, a minor safeguarding issue was brought to the attention of the team during the inspection by the school.

Leadership and management

Leaders ensure that Richmond Park Primary school provides a caring and inclusive environment. They focus well on supporting the well-being of pupils and staff. They have developed a strong sense of teamwork and are committed to helping new pupils to settle well into life at the school. This is important because of the high levels of mobility of families within the community and the school.

The headteacher and her team have worked with a range of stakeholders to establish a suitable vision to support the development of pupils' well-being and to create an inclusive environment where pupils feel respected and safe. However, there is not a clear enough strategic vision for curriculum and teaching that is understood by all staff. Leaders have not communicated high enough expectations with all staff in relation to the quality of teaching and learning or the provision for

skills. In addition, they have not planned carefully enough to secure improvements in important aspects of the school's work.

Leaders undertake a suitable programme of activities to monitor and evaluate the school's work. This includes considering an appropriate range of first-hand evidence such as looking at pupils' work and listening to pupils' views. However, within their evaluation work, leaders do not focus well enough on the impact that teaching and provision has on pupils' progress in developing and applying knowledge, skills or understanding. This limits leaders' ability to plan precisely to secure improvements. For example, they have not identified important shortcomings in teaching and the provision for skills in particular and plans for developing the school's curriculum are not sufficiently focused or effective.

The school provides a suitable range of professional learning for staff that focuses on improving well-being, teaching and learning. However, leaders do not evaluate this work well enough. In particular, they do not consider the impact this work has on the quality of classroom provision or the progress that pupils make. As a result, it has had limited impact on improving teachers' approaches to curriculum design, the quality of teaching or their expectations of what pupils can achieve.

The governing body are keen and enthusiastic supporters of the school. They play to their strengths and expertise and discharge their duties appropriately, for example by ensuring the school meets the requirements for healthy eating. The headteacher provides regular reports and keeps them informed about aspects such as pupils' well-being, safeguarding and the school's premises. However, they are not provided with sufficient or accurate enough information about pupil progress, the quality of teaching or the school's approach to curriculum delivery. As a result, they do not hold leaders to account well enough for improvements in relation to these aspects of the school's work.

Leaders and governors manage finances appropriately and have successfully recovered a deficit budget over the past three years. They review spending regularly and take suitable actions where necessary. However, a few decisions taken to reduce costs have placed additional pressure on school leaders and this has hampered their ability to evaluate and plan for improvement. Leaders use the pupil development grant appropriately to fund a suitable range of support the emotional development of vulnerable pupils.

Leaders communicate regularly and beneficially with parents. They kept in close touch with their pupils and the wider school community throughout the imposed lockdowns. There are a range of helpful ways for parents to influence the school's work. For example, the parent council have supported schools to make changes to improve the information they receive during parent meetings.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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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