



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

A report on

Heolgerrig Community School

**Heolgerrig Road
Heolgerrig
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1SB**

Date of inspection: September 2024

by

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

About Heolgerrig Community School

Name of provider	Heolgerrig Community School
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	212
Pupils of statutory school age	166
Number in nursery classes	29
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 22.9%)	7.8%
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 11.1%)	9.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/11/2017
Start date of inspection	30/09/2024

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.

Summary

The headteacher is a committed leader who fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment, promoting high expectations for all. The school's collaborative approach to leadership cultivates strong relationships between staff, pupils, parents, governors, and the wider community, reflected in the behaviour and well-being of pupils throughout the school.

The school's ethos is rooted in mutual respect and partnership, with pupils naturally supporting each other, both in classrooms and shared spaces. These inclusive values are reflected through the school's pupil leadership groups and playground buddy systems, creating an atmosphere where all pupils feel supported and included.

The leadership team's self-evaluation processes are carried out thoroughly, identifying the school's strengths and aspects needing development. However, the school's improvement priorities are often too broad, leading to a lack of clarity for staff and governors. This hinders pupils' progress in a few areas such as Welsh language and numeracy.

The school's curriculum is suitably broad. Teachers plan engaging and meaningful learning experiences. They provide useful feedback that enables most pupils to make progress in many aspects of their learning. However, teachers often over-direct the learning, limiting opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners and thinkers.

Pupils apply their literacy skills appropriately across the curriculum. Their numeracy skills are not as well developed, with limited opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in broader contexts. Additionally, while younger pupils make good progress in learning Welsh, older pupils struggle to develop fluency due to inconsistent use of the language across lessons.

The school's governors support leaders effectively to manage the budget and to evaluate the school's work. For example, they ensure that resources are allocated appropriately to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN).

Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Sharpen the focus of school improvement priorities to ensure that all staff and governors understand their role in bringing about improvement, including ensuring that pupils develop their Welsh and numeracy skills
- R2 Enable pupils to develop appropriately as independent learners and provide opportunities for them to influence how they learn

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Leaders and staff at Heolgerrig Primary School create a welcoming, supportive and inclusive environment for pupils. Their high expectations are reflected in a vision that prioritises pupils' learning and well-being.

Spotlight: Developing pupils' understanding of relationships to create an inclusive environment and support well-being

Together, pupils, staff, and parents create an environment where pupils feel supported and encouraged to thrive. The positive relationships demonstrated across the school are reflected in pupils' good behaviour, their understanding of routines and their calm movement around the school. This is especially evident in the way pupils develop strong friendships, co-operate and support each other. Nearly all pupils take pride in their school, demonstrating politeness towards staff and each other. They are eager to share their views and successes with visitors, reflecting a strong sense of belonging and engagement. Pupils develop valuable skills through leadership groups, where older pupils guide younger ones in expressing their ideas and recording their thoughts, cultivating a culture of mutual respect and responsibility. This spirit of collaboration, inclusion and kindness is further nurtured on the playground, where school buddies offer help to peers who might be feeling lonely.

The headteacher has fostered a highly committed team. New members of staff are integrated into this team purposefully and benefit from early opportunities to develop leadership skills. Leaders actively drive rigorous self-evaluation and improvement processes, using a useful range of first-hand evidence and assessment information. They identify the school's strengths and areas for development, with a suitable focus on national priorities. However, leaders often focus on too broad a range of improvement priorities. As a result, a majority of staff are unclear about the specific aspects of the school's work most in need of development, such as addressing pupils' limited progress in developing numeracy and Welsh language skills.

The headteacher plans professional learning and research opportunities that support the school's vision for effective teaching and learning. For example, leaders implemented approaches to teaching reading that have had a positive impact on pupils' progress. However, leaders do not always ensure that improvement planning is clear and manageable. As a result, the pace of improvement is often slow and limits pupils' learning. Although the school has prioritised peer assessment strategies as an area for development, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop as effective independent learners able to assess their own and others' work.

Many teachers engage pupils effectively in their work and provide appropriately challenging learning experiences. They use feedback well to ensure that most pupils know their next steps. Teachers and many teaching assistants consider how to challenge pupils' thinking and improve their talk. Most pupils work diligently and purposefully. Pupils in the youngest classes develop their independence well. For example, they make their own selections from a wide range of natural materials to create a picture of their choosing. However, in a majority of lessons, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to influence their own learning, and this limits their development as effective independent learners.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is effective. Leaders carefully monitor the progress of vulnerable pupils and use the information gathered to plan for their needs. They support staff in accurately identifying appropriate interventions matched to pupils' individual needs, enabling pupils with ALN to make sound progress in their learning.

The school has developed a suitably broad and holistic curriculum based on Curriculum for Wales. Teachers plan a worthwhile range of learning opportunities, including experiences that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of Welsh culture and heritage. Pupils engage in meaningful projects, such as exploring the local history of Merthyr and of Wales. Staff carefully consider opportunities for pupils to learn about the influence of disabled people and people from the global majority on history and life today. For example, pupils consider the lyrics of protest songs and how they highlight the plight of oppressed communities and influential leaders, such as Nelson Mandela advocating for change. This helps pupils develop a strong understanding of their locality and the wider world and encourages respectful and inclusive attitudes. However, the school has not yet developed the curriculum well enough to help pupils to learn about LGBTQ+ people. Pupils have a few opportunities to consider spiritual and religious issues in collective worship. In lessons, pupils consider a range of spiritual and moral issues and questions thoughtfully when learning about Buddhism and Christianity.

The school's curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills to other aspects of their work. Many transfer their writing skills successfully, for instance to develop their descriptive writing skills. Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their mathematical knowledge. However, they do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their numeracy skills across other areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not develop their numeracy skills well enough.

Many younger pupils are beginning to develop a sound knowledge of simple Welsh words and phrases. Pupils in Year 2 are beginning to extend sentences thoughtfully when speaking about the weather. However, teachers do not model the language often enough or provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence as pupils move through the school. As a result, a majority of older pupils do not make sufficient progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

Governors support the headteacher effectively to carry out monitoring and evaluation activities and to manage the school's finances. They ensure that resources, such as

the Pupil Development Grant, are used effectively to support pupils, including those experiencing poverty. The recent introduction of sensory rooms has positively impacted pupils, demonstrating the school's commitment to well-being and inclusion.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site security do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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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