



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

A report on

**Gwauncelyn Primary
Heol Deg
Tonteg
Pontypridd
RCT
CF38 1EU**

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by

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

About Gwauncelyn Primary

Gwauncelyn Primary is a community school in Tonteg, near Pontypridd in the local authority of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

There are 424 pupils on roll between the ages of 3 and 11. This includes 27 part-time pupils and 23 full-time pupils who attend the school's nursery. The number on roll has risen steadily since the last inspection in 2011. The school is currently organised into 13 single-age classes and one mixed-age class.

The rolling average for the past three years means that approximately 10% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is much lower than the all-Wales average of around 19%. The school has identified that around 11% of pupils have additional needs. This is well below the national average (21%). A very few pupils have statements of special educational needs. No pupils speak Welsh at home, and a very few pupils speak English as an additional language.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2013. At the time of the inspection, the school was led by the deputy headteacher in the capacity of acting headteacher.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

This school provides a good quality of education in a safe and caring environment. Teachers provide many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn about things that interest them. The curriculum is exciting and engaging, and benefits in particular from specialist teaching in music and the forest school provision. Nearly all pupils enjoy their learning, and are keen to participate in school life. Most pupils work well together. As a result, they make good progress. By Year 6, nearly all pupils achieve good standards in English, and most are confident mathematicians. Staff know and care for their pupils well. There is a good sense of team spirit among the staff. School leaders, supported by the governors, work effectively together. They provide a strong sense of purpose to the school's work.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

R1 Sharpen improvement planning

R2 Improve pupils' standards of Welsh, especially in key stage 2

R3 Improve the systems for monitoring pupils' attendance to ensure that pupils attend school more regularly

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

A majority of pupils enter the school with skills that are above the average for their age. Nearly all pupils make good progress during their time at school. By Year 6, nearly all achieve standards at least in line with those expected for their age, and around a half achieve higher-than-expected standards. The very few pupils eligible for free school meals make sound progress, and pupils with additional needs make appropriate progress against their individual targets.

In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. In the nursery, they develop early confidence to speak and begin to extend their sentences in order to express themselves more clearly. For example, they gleefully explain to inspectors that they are covering their T-shirts in mud as camouflage, just in case they encounter any predatory dinosaurs. Throughout the foundation phase, pupils listen attentively to adults and respond appropriately to questions. Many discuss their work together effectively, for example when deciding how to provide directions to guide each other through the outdoor area. By Year 6, nearly all pupils speak confidently and clearly. They listen carefully and respect each other's views. For example, they discuss intently the best way to measure the time taken for marbles to descend into liquids of differing viscosity.

Most pupils are enthusiastic about reading. In the foundation phase, most use their knowledge of sounds effectively to work out unfamiliar words. By Year 2, the more able pupils read extremely well. They talk enthusiastically about characters and books they like. By Year 6, most pupils discuss texts by their favourite authors in detail and identify themes and issues in books they enjoy reading. They can infer information from what they have read, and form logical deductions.

Across the school, many pupils produce extended pieces of written work of high quality. By Year 2, most pupils write successfully for different purposes, such as writing a diary entry or recounting the gunpowder plot. Nearly all form their letters correctly and develop their handwriting effectively. They use basic punctuation accurately and spell common words correctly. By Year 6, most use sensitive, well-chosen vocabulary when writing poems. They formulate effective questions, for example, when researching the first moon landing. Most pupils develop neat, joined handwriting. They use a wide range of punctuation to organise their work and vary their sentence structures to engage and sustain the reader's interest.

Most pupils develop appropriate listening skills in Welsh. This is because nearly all teachers routinely use instructional Welsh language alongside English in the classroom. As a result, pupils of all ages recognise the importance of learning Welsh in order to become members of a bilingual society.

In the foundation phase, most pupils ask and respond to simple questions in Welsh confidently. For example, they are keen to ask visitors 'Pwy wyt ti?'. However, they tend not to sustain this early progress and enthusiasm across key stage 2 and, as a result, older pupils' progress is too slow. For example, by Year 6, many pupils only use a few basic Welsh sentence patterns appropriately, and struggle to engage in a simple conversation in Welsh. As a result, too few reach the standards that they could.

Many pupils across the school develop very strong mathematical skills, especially in number work. Most pupils in the foundation phase have a good understanding of a range of mathematical concepts, such as shape and space. They record simple data effectively and measure carefully. For example, in the reception class, nearly all pupils count up to 20 cupfuls of different liquids accurately to make their 'Jurassic juice'. In Year 1, most pupils use well-chosen mathematical vocabulary to describe the position, direction and movement of an electronic toy to transport the Jolly Postman around a map of the local area.

By the end of key stage 2, nearly all pupils are competent mathematicians and they apply their reasoning skills well to solve mathematical problems. Most develop good mental skills based upon a solid understanding of place value and the relationships between numbers. For example, many pupils in Year 6 confidently calculate percentage discounts for football fans on purchases in the Ton Pentre Association Football Club (AFC) shop. Pupils have very secure mathematical skills, but they do not apply these to the same level in their other work, for example in science, where older and more able pupils limit the representation of their findings to simple block graphs.

Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are appropriate. In the foundation phase, pupils confidently programme electronic devices and research information on tablet computers. Pupils in Year 6 use software to create graphs and charts, for example to compare rising house prices in the locality over time.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils enjoy their learning and participate in lessons enthusiastically. From an early age, they show a positive attitude towards their work and persevere with their tasks well. For example, pupils in Year 2 are keen to find as many solutions as possible to their daily mathematics challenge. Most pupils show good levels of resilience when facing challenges in their work. For instance, older pupils working with a teaching assistant sustain their concentration to master tricky and irregular spelling patterns.

Nearly all pupils throughout the school show strong levels of co-operation when working with partners or in small groups. They are considerate when listening to the views of others and share their own thoughts and ideas readily.

Nearly all pupils are happy and safe in school. They understand how to stay safe, including online, and know whom to go to if they are upset or worried. Most pupils understand the need to eat and drink healthily and to take regular exercise. For example, nearly all pupils enjoy participating in the daily mile. Many pupils improve their fitness by participating in a range of extra-curricular clubs, such as rugby, football and dance.

Most pupils behave well in classes and around the school, for example during lunchtimes and breaktimes. They are polite and considerate, and show respect to one another and adults. Pupils and adults have very positive working relationships, which enhance their sense of wellbeing effectively. Nearly all pupils have a strong understanding of fairness and equality and they consider and appreciate the views of other people well.

Overall, pupils undertake a wide range of responsibilities effectively. Many pupils contribute enthusiastically to the wider life of the school through the different pupil groups. For example, the maths council recently organised a whole-school number day to support a children's charity. This helped them to develop a sense of pride and achievement, as well as an understanding of the value of charity work.

Pupils' attendance has improved recently, but has still placed the school in the lower 50% compared with similar schools over the past four years. Despite a recent initiative to improve attendance, too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. A small proportion of pupils are regularly late for school.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Across the school, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers provide motivating tasks to engage and enthuse pupils. The pace of learning is brisk and lessons are enjoyable. As a result, relationships between staff and pupils are positive and respectful, and nearly all pupils want to learn. Classrooms are productive and orderly, and all adults manage pupils' behaviour well.

A particular strength is the quality of adults' questioning skills. For example, in a Year 6 science class, the teacher adeptly asks probing, open-ended questions to spark pupils' lively, scientific discussions about how to set up an investigation. Pupils then have space and time to work out and plan their own investigation independently.

Teachers use a good range of interactive strategies to engage all pupils actively in their learning. As a result, pupils are keen to collaborate. They discuss their work purposefully with their peers, and this helps them to learn and their teachers to gauge their understanding. Generally, pupils are beginning to make choices about what and how they learn. For example, in the foundation phase, teachers encourage pupils to decide which tasks they would like to complete first. However, on a few occasions across the school, adults overdirect pupils' learning. For example, they instruct pupils to use particular equipment, rather than allowing them to make decisions and choices for themselves.

Nearly all teachers provide pupils with regular feedback about how to improve their work, using consistent language and indicators. In English, this feedback focuses well on providing a way forward, and pupils generally respond positively. In other areas of the curriculum, teachers praise pupils' good efforts. However, their feedback does not always identify clearly enough the next steps for pupils to improve their work.

There are many activities that successfully develop pupils' knowledge and appreciation of the heritage and culture of Wales. For example, pupils in the nursery engage enthusiastically with Welsh country dancing. In key stage 2, pupils use their historical research skills to explore Tonteg as it was in the 1960s. Nearly all teachers are good role models for the Welsh language, but the provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is not consistent or regular enough, especially in key stage 2. As a result, pupils' progress is too slow. There are strong links with the Urdd eisteddfod, which provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to extend their learning into more creative aspects of Welsh culture.

Teachers' plans incorporate the national literacy and numeracy framework through designated lessons in English and mathematics. The school's schemes of work ensure a breadth of activities that develop pupils' literacy skills well in other subject areas. There are suitable plans for pupils to develop their skills in ICT. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum. Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' number skills in mathematics lessons, but they do not provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply these skills at a high enough level in a wide range of contexts, such as in science and geography. In a few cases, and especially in numeracy and mathematics, the tasks that teachers plan do not challenge the most able pupils to achieve as well as they could.

The school's curriculum meets all statutory requirements and provides a valuable framework for pupils' learning. Teachers plan engaging topics that capture pupils' imaginations and make learning exciting. Learning experiences in the foundation phase are of good quality and meet the needs of the younger pupils well. In addition, there is specialist teaching provision for music and PE, and all pupils make use of the school's swimming pool to learn to swim. Recently, the school has introduced forest schools and developed purposeful outdoor learning sessions. These make a worthwhile contribution to pupils' engagement and wellbeing.

Teachers review the curriculum appropriately in order to engage and inspire pupils. For example, after listening to the youngest pupils' views about what they would like to learn, teachers devised topic plans based on dinosaurs, which incorporate the skills that pupils need. As a result, pupils are well motivated to learn through the topics they have chosen.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has an inclusive and caring ethos that permeates its daily life. It provides a safe environment for all its pupils and staff nurture pupils' personal, social, spiritual and cultural skills well. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school has a comprehensive range of processes for recording and monitoring the progress of all individual pupils. However, on occasions, the individual targets that teachers set for pupils are not sharp enough to ensure that the pupils can focus on what they need to do next.

Provision for pupils who need additional support is good. The school uses a wide range of provision that meets their needs successfully. Appropriately trained staff deliver a suitable range of intervention programmes to improve targeted pupils' literacy, numeracy and emotional skills. The additional needs co-ordinator has a clear strategic approach and has recently developed rigorous tracking procedures. For example, individual progress plans map out the support that identified pupils require to catch up with other pupils. However, it is still too early to see the full impact of these improvements in ensuring that all pupils with additional needs make sufficient progress in a timely manner.

The school has an established range of worthwhile pupil groups, which take responsibility for developing ideas for improvement and change within the school. For example, the school council chose the core values for the school's recently introduced programme of termly values.

The school has effective arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. Regular PE sessions, including the daily mile, and a wide range of extra-curricular sports, such as tag rugby, netball and judo, provide further worthwhile opportunities for pupils to enjoy the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Other clubs provide enjoyable creative experiences, such as drama, French and music. Each year, pupils have the opportunity to display their creative talents at the school eisteddfod, for example through singing, and writing stories based on Welsh myths and legends. Subsequent involvement in the National Urdd Eisteddfod also allows them to gain success in a wide variety of competitions.

The school celebrates good attendance through rewards for individual pupils and for classes. However, procedures for tracking attendance across the school lack clarity, and there is no consistent approach to improving pupils' attendance in a proactive way. Consequently, although attendance has improved a little recently, it has not improved in line with the rest of Wales.

Teachers work closely with parents. For example, parental consultations provide appropriate opportunities for parents to learn how to support their children's wellbeing and learning. Parents welcome the wrap-around childcare available on site. There is an active parent and teacher association, which organises a wide and varied range of activities. It raises beneficial funds, which the school has used to provide additional resources, such as outdoor play equipment, reading books and laptops.

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders provide clear purpose and direction to the staff, who are well motivated. Regular, informative meetings and briefings ensure that all staff remain up-to-date about events across the busy and vibrant school. During the headteacher's absence, the acting headteacher has provided beneficial interim leadership for the school, with the support of staff, parents and governors. Senior leaders have adjusted their roles and responsibilities accordingly and there is a good team spirit.

The governors provide active support for the school. For example, they took prompt and efficient action recently to ensure the sustainability of the school's wrap-around care provision in order that pupils and their parents continue to benefit from the service. Governing body meetings are regular and efficient, and governors carry out their statutory duties well, for example in reviewing policies and providing a comprehensive and detailed annual report to parents. However, governors are less robust in holding the school leadership to account, for instance in making improvements to pupils' attendance.

The school's self-evaluation is an honest, concise and accurate document, which captures the school's strengths and areas for improvement reasonably well. It uses a wide array of data on pupils' performance to identify strengths and shortcomings in the most recent cohorts of pupils well. However, the evaluation does not always take appropriate account of the longer-term trends in teachers' assessments, particularly for the very few vulnerable learners. The priorities in the self-evaluation link closely to the overarching aims within the school improvement plan.

Leaders undertake a regular and robust cycle of monitoring activities, including observing the quality of teaching and learning, scrutinising pupils' books and listening to learners. However, their findings do not always link tightly enough to the improvement priorities they subsequently identify.

The school improvement plan contains a large number and wide range of different actions and initiatives, and, over recent time, leaders have introduced many new priorities. Often these are worthwhile improvements to the provision, for example to improve the teaching of mathematics or reading, derived from shortcomings identified through information about pupils' progress. However, the success criteria for these plans are not precise enough for leaders to identify whether they have been effective in improving outcomes for learners. In general, improvement plans, including plans to support vulnerable learners through the pupil development grant, have broadly meet requirements, but they lack a cohesive overview and well-focused, sharp actions.

Through strong performance management arrangements, leaders set targets to improve pupils' standards and encourage the professional development of all staff. There are suitable links to worthwhile training, which help to address a number of school priorities, for example the value and impact of the outdoors on pupils' learning.

There are beneficial opportunities for staff to improve their professional skills and knowledge by planning together and sharing good practice with other schools. Teachers also undertake purposeful action research, for example into pupils' reasoning skills. There are good opportunities for teachers to plan, observe, refine and improve lessons as part of small teams. This activity has a positive impact on the quality of teaching within the school. It encourages staff to reflect on their own professional practice and promotes valuable wider professional learning activity.

There are sufficient well-qualified, committed staff to deliver the curriculum effectively. The school makes good use of outside providers to enhance the learning provision, for example for music or sport. Generally, job descriptions outline the post holders' duties effectively. However, the arrangements for teaching assistants to cover classes during teachers' statutory planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time are not clear within the job descriptions.

Leaders, including the governors, manage and monitor the school budget tightly. Over time, leaders use the pupil development grant suitably to support the provision for eligible pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement. Overall, school leaders think through decisions about spending carefully in order to achieve good outcomes for pupils. For example, they allocate additional resources to ICT, in preparation for the Welsh Government's new digital competence framework.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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