



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

A report on

**Caradog Primary School
Clifton Street
Aberdare
CF44 7PB**

Date of inspection: October 2019

by

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

About Caradog Primary School

Caradog Primary is in the town of Aberdare, in the Cynon Valley, Rhondda Cynon Taf. There are 221 pupils on roll, aged between 3 and 11 years including 30 full-time nursery pupils. They are taught in eight single-age classes. The school also provides for 12 pupils within a key stage 2 learning resource base for pupils with complex needs.

Over the past three years, around 30% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is above the all Wales average of 18%. Around 21% of pupils are on the special needs register, which is the same as the Wales average. A very few pupils have a statement of special education needs. Nearly all pupils in the school are white British. No pupils speak Welsh at home. A very few pupils have English as an additional language.

Estyn last inspected the school in April 2014. The headteacher took up her post in September 2019.

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

Caradog Primary is a caring school where pupils and staff are considerate towards each other. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour and wellbeing is a particular strength. Nearly all pupils make good progress in the development of their skills and knowledge over time.

The work of the school's nurture provision is very strong. Adults support pupils well, to develop as rounded citizens. Staff plan and deliver interesting learning experiences that engage and motivate most pupils. They have high expectations of pupils and maintain a positive and encouraging working relationship with them. Lessons are engaging and nearly all pupils enjoy learning. As a result, most pupils work hard and nearly all behave well. The school's support for the development of pupils' skills in literacy is strong. Staff ensure frequent opportunities for pupils to apply and develop these skills further in their work across the curriculum.

Following a period of leadership instability, the new headteacher has quickly and ably established a strong team ethos among the staff. All leaders place the interest of the pupils at the heart of their work and focus well on providing good quality of classroom provision and, as a result, by the end of key stage 2, many pupils achieve well. Leaders know the school and are working successfully to develop their skills in school improvement. This is leading to solid progress in key areas of 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 Plan specific and measurable actions to support school improvement
- R2 Ensure that pupils receive the right level of challenge in their work and further develop their understanding of their own progress and of their next steps for learning
- R3 Ensure that the school provides pupils with regular opportunities to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum

What happens next

Not in follow-up

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Throughout their time in school, most pupils progress well from their individual starting points. Many pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, leave with standards at least in line with those expected for their age and ability.

Most pupils' speaking and listening skills in English and Welsh are developing well. They listen attentively to adults and their peers in both languages and communicate confidently. Most pupils follow Welsh commands and instructions sensibly. When speaking in English most pupils respond appropriately to questions and many extend each other's ideas. For instance, pupils in Year 6 respond to each other with perceptive thoughts and interjections when discussing how they can improve their work and give well-considered reasons about their opinions on the class novel.

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic about learning Welsh and many can see the benefit of doing so in terms of their prospects in securing work when they are older. By the end of the foundation phase, many pupils hold simple conversations, for example to discuss their feelings and the weather. They provide extended answers to basic questions, for instance by giving their name, where they live and additional information about their families. By the end of key stage 2, many extend their responses to questions using a wider vocabulary and more complex phrases. Pupils' pronunciation in Welsh is developing well.

The reading skills of most pupils are developing well in both languages. In the foundation phase, most recognise familiar, simple English words and use their knowledge of letters and the sounds that they represent to build up words. Many Year 2 pupils read simple Welsh electronic storybooks confidently. More able pupils make good use of punctuation to enhance meaning and expression. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils read a variety of English and Welsh texts correctly and with understanding. They adapt their tone of voice effectively to convey meaning. By the end of key stage 2, when reading English texts, many pupils skim and scan passages to locate information and a majority infer and deduce information from their reading. Nearly all pupils talk at length about their favourite authors of English books, explain their likes and dislikes and give informed reasons for their views.

Pupils' writing skills in both languages are developing well. By Year 2, most pupils record their thoughts with increasing independence. They use their knowledge of sounds and symbols to spell short, familiar words correctly. Many develop their use of basic punctuation such as capital letters and full stops well. By Year 6, most pupils present their work neatly and with care. Many pupils' spell familiar words accurately. However, pupils occasionally use too limited a range of vocabulary. Pupils have a sound understanding of sentence structure but occasionally miss opportunities to adapt their sentences to add effect or interest for the reader. When writing in Welsh, most pupils use specific sentence patterns suitably and by the end of key stage 2, write interesting pieces of text independently, for example when describing their school.

Many pupils develop their skills in mathematics successfully. In the foundation phase, they display a secure grasp of number facts and use this information effectively to solve simple number problems. Most pupils in reception recognise two-dimensional shapes confidently and use their knowledge to decorate a witch's hat with colourful shapes, which they can name. Many younger pupils in foundation phase handle different measurements and use mathematical vocabulary correctly to discuss their work, such as when measuring the height and circumferences of pumpkins. Across key stage 2, many pupils have an effective understanding of mathematical strategies and apply them in a limited range of contexts, such as calculating the effects of gravity on their weight on different planets. Older key stage 2 pupils accurately interpret data from a variety of line graphs. However, they do not apply their numeracy skills consistently across the curriculum.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In the foundation phase, pupils use equipment, apps and programs confidently. They use programmable toys accurately to negotiate set courses. In key stage 2, most pupils develop their skills effectively to communicate their ideas, create spreadsheets and handle data. For instance, they create a database after surveying the local park. Pupils in Year 6 use visual programming confidently to create a simple animation of a penguin.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and are happy to learn. They feel safe in school and most have a strong awareness of respect for others, which they display through their daily interactions. They show consideration, courtesy and good manners when interacting with their peers and adults. In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils move independently and sensibly between indoor and outdoor activities. Across the school, nearly all pupils display very good behaviour. They engage confidently with each other and visitors and display an eagerness to discuss their learning and share their ideas and thoughts. Many pupils are beginning to develop a sound understanding of how to eat well and keep active to stay healthy, and nearly all know how to stay safe online.

Most pupils are punctual and nearly all are keen, eager to learn and engage well in their learning. Most are ready to learn at the start of the day and often settle very quickly into the early morning routines, which include solving mathematical or literacy challenges during registration. Most pupils display resilience and persevere to overcome challenges and conclude tasks. Many pupils work independently and display the self-discipline to remain focused. For example, pupils in Year 4 organise their research tasks systematically. They monitor how well they complete their tasks through the various activities when researching the defeat of Boudica.

Many pupils work well collaboratively, thoughtfully considering their peers' ideas. They encourage each other and offer support to ensure peers are successful in fulfilling their tasks. For instance, a member of the Criw Cymraeg encourages his peers to improve their responses when engaging in a Welsh discussion. Throughout the school, many pupils use self-help strategies when they get stuck with their work. For example, pupils use 'three before me', they use at least three approaches to overcome difficulties independently before seeking adult support.

Nearly all pupils feel they have a voice in their learning. They make choices about the topics they learn, their learning 'missions' and homework tasks. Many pupils readily participate in the wide range of pupil voice groups and show commitment to improving pupils' learning and recreational experiences. For example, they make suggestions about improving the management of behaviour across the school, which staff then implement. This has had a positive effect on the ethos of the school by supporting pupils to manage their own behaviour.

Rates of pupils' attendance place the school in the lower 50%, in two of the last three years, when compared with similar schools from across Wales.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Teachers and support staff work well together to plan and deliver a wide range of interesting learning experiences that meet the needs of most pupils effectively. For example, older foundation phase pupils are inspired by the story of 'King Sparkle' to build castles out of cardboard boxes in the outdoor area. In key stage 2, pupils collaborate well to research interesting facts about the First World War, the Celts and Romans. Teachers include pupils' ideas successfully in their planning and there are many opportunities for pupils to work independently in learning areas. Teachers know the pupils well and provide them with effective support while they work. The very good working relationships between adults and pupils has a positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

Foundation phase provision is effective in the school. Staff understand and implement foundation phase pedagogy well. They use the good quality outdoor environment well to provide stimulating and challenging activities that engage pupils fully. In particular, they provide engaging opportunities for messy play, where pupils develop their creative and problem solving skills with natural and manmade materials. For example, teachers plan for pupils to direct their own learning, through engaging them well in big painting, mud kitchens, junk modelling and water play.

Teachers use a wide variety of effective teaching methods, which motivate pupils to learn. They share clear learning objectives with pupils that ensure that many understand what they need to do to be successful within tasks. Support staff work alongside teachers skilfully and contribute effectively to pupils' learning. This ensures valuable support for individuals and specific groups of pupils. In many classes, where teaching is at its best, teachers use imaginative hooks to entice pupils into interesting topics and keep up a brisk pace to their lessons. In these classes, teachers have high expectations and use open-ended questions successfully to encourage pupils to think for themselves. As a result, pupils have the confidence to try, and undertake tasks enthusiastically and independently, without fear of making errors. This strengthens their commitment to their work positively.

The school supports pupils in the learning support class effectively. For instance, teaching assistants have been trained in maths and language interventions, which are having a positive impact on the pupils' development and progress. Staff plan thoughtfully for the pupils, for instance by teaching the story of Little Red Riding Hood through drama and role-play.

The school has recently strengthened its use of assessment for learning strategies. Teachers provide pupils with valuable feedback during lessons and encourage them to persevere and reflect further on how to improve their work. This is beginning to support pupil progress. However, teachers do not always support pupils to select tasks that challenge them to extend their learning. For example, too many pupils repeat tasks at a similar level when choosing from the range of 'chilli challenges' and, as a result do not always make the progress they might.

The school makes good use of links with the local community to enhance the curriculum, such as when visiting the local country park, the library and when growing their own food produce in the nearby allotment. Overall, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and ICT skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 2 write instructions to make a light for a spaceship and in Year 5 pupils use the Rugby World Cup website confidently to research interesting statistics about how Wales performed in rugby matches. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects are less well developed across the school.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills within Welsh lessons and at other times of the day, is effective. As a result, most pupils develop their Welsh language skills progressively as they move through the school. Regular 'Helpwr Heddiw' sessions are valuable, they support and motivate most pupils to enjoy learning the Welsh language. Teachers promote aspects of Welsh heritage and culture successfully, for example, through studying a local Welsh artist, performing in the annual school Eisteddfod, and a residential visit to Llangranog.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Staff ensure that the school is a happy and very inclusive community. They know pupils very well and demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring their wellbeing.

The school has effective procedures to track and monitor all pupils' progress and wellbeing and to identify those with special educational needs and pupils in need of extra support. The school provides an effective range of interventions for pupils through regular timetabled support sessions to develop their mathematics and language skills, as well as sessions to meet their emotional and social needs. For example, pupils have access to the 'Rainbow Room', which has been developed as a quiet space where pupils reflect on their feelings and moods in a calm and safe environment. The school works appropriately with external agencies and specialist services, such as the neuro-developmental unit in the local hospital to ensure pupils' needs are met.

Staff in the learning support class provide pupils with a wide range of effective personalised learning experiences. They utilise a variety of stimulating resources to ensure that pupils in this class also benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to each pupil's individual needs.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. This includes a healthy fruit tuck shop, which pupils help to run. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Teachers provide pupils with suitable opportunities to undertake responsibilities and participate fully in the life of the school. For example, pupils across the school fulfil roles such as the 'Digital Doctors' to support their peers in different year groups to develop their ICT skills. There are suitable arrangements for pupils to elect their peers onto pupil voice groups such as school council, eco committee and peer mediators. This develops their understanding of democratic processes and decision making well.

The school uses effective restorative approaches to promote good citizenship, important values and high morals. School staff build very successful professional relationships with pupils and respond promptly and successfully to any incidents of bullying or discrimination. The school provides a limited range of extra-curricular activities that include science and technology, Urdd club, netball, and the feel good club. These broaden pupils' experiences appropriately. Teachers use collective worship and assemblies effectively to enhance pupils' spiritual and cultural development. For example, a whole school assembly focuses well on being thankful for food and farmers at harvest time.

The school has very successful relationships with parents. Through good use of social media, the school keeps parents well informed about events and activities. The school involves parents in their children's learning, by holding events such as foundation phase open days and workshops on new maths initiatives to provide parents with information with which to support their children. The school provides parents with opportunities to choose topics for future workshops by using feedback forms following these events.

Leadership and management: Good

The newly appointed headteacher has a clear vision for the school and high expectations for the wellbeing and achievement of all pupils. She has a robust long-term strategy for school improvement and thoughtfully introduces strategies to support effective school development. For example, staff at all levels have time to work together to develop a greater understanding and undertake their roles and responsibilities.

The headteacher receives valuable support from a dedicated senior leadership team who drive the highly inclusive ethos that is a strong feature of the school. The head teacher distributes leadership well and the grouping of staff in teams leads to a positive culture of openness and sharing of good practice. Staff work very well together and show a high degree of commitment, contributing well to new initiatives. For instance, they provide imaginative hooks and resources to stimulate pupils' thinking during classroom and outdoor sessions. This enables pupils to choose what and how they would like to learn.

Governors understand their roles and responsibilities well. They conduct effective sub-committee and termly meetings and are linked to curriculum areas, according to their strengths. For example, governors responsible for literacy and special education needs, foster useful links with the relevant school staff to monitor the development of these areas of the school's work. As a result, most governors have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are very supportive of the school and contribute successfully to self-evaluation processes through interviews with curriculum leaders, participating in learning walks and scrutinising pupils' work.

Self-evaluation activities are purposeful and take place across the academic year. Senior leaders play a prominent role in self-evaluation and draw effectively on a range of first-hand evidence, for example from pupil, staff and parent questionnaires. Leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. This enables the school to identify the most important priorities for improvement, for example within its improvement plan. However, actions within individual priorities for improvement are not specific enough to enable leaders to identify their successes and any areas that need further improvement.

Leaders are creating an effective culture and ethos to support staff development. Nearly all staff take part in a wide range of purposeful professional learning activities that have a beneficial impact on current practice and focus well on enhancing provision for pupils. Staff share knowledge with one another freely and effectively, thus training each other through collaboration as well as participating in formal training sessions. For example, teaching assistants are trained well to provide useful intervention strategies to those pupils who require extra support with their learning. Staff in the learning support class receive beneficial training that enable them to meet the particular needs of pupils effectively. Nearly all staff benefit from useful collaborative work within the school and with other schools in the local cluster, such as in the school-to-school numerical reasoning development project.

The school has effective procedures for the performance management of teaching and support staff. These procedures link directly to school improvement priorities and successfully address the personal development needs of staff. Leaders and governors monitor the budget effectively. They make prudent decisions to ensure that financial planning meets the needs of the school.

Leaders allocate human and financial resources effectively to support current school priorities and strategies, such as providing a wider range of ICT equipment. The head teacher deploys staff effectively to meet the needs of pupils, for example, by making effective use of teaching assistants to provide essential support for vulnerable pupils.

The school has made beneficial attempts to reduce the impact of poverty on its pupils by ensuring that most pupils eligible for free school meals make good progress. The school uses the pupil development grant effectively, for example, to fund a suitable range of interventions, a breakfast club, and to provide parents with reading workshops to assist them in supporting their children when reading at home.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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' wellbeing, 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)

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.

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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