



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

A report on

Caegarw Primary School

**Troed Y Rhiw Road
Caegarw
Mountain Ash
RCT
CF45 4BH**

Date of inspection: May 2023

by

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

About Caegarw Primary School

Name of provider	Caegarw Primary School
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	171
Pupils of statutory school age	134
Number in nursery classes	21
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 23.0%)	18.8%
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 16.1%)	3.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	03/09/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	09/02/2015
Start date of inspection	22/05/2023
*	

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

The pupils of Caegarw Primary School enter the school gates with smiles on their faces in anticipation of what the day ahead holds. They are eager to learn and talk enthusiastically about their work. Pupils are respectful towards each other and all adults. They thrive in the school's happy environment. The kindness pupils show each other is as a result of the deep-rooted caring ethos established in the school. These positive attitudes towards school lead to exceptionally well-behaved pupils.

Across the school most pupils make good progress in many aspects of their learning. They develop oracy skills well, write successfully in all areas of learning and develop their understanding of a range of mathematical concepts well. Most pupils take responsibility maturely in a variety of pupil voice groups, which impact positively on the life of the school. As a result, the pupils are aware of their place in society and the importance of being a responsible citizen.

The staff provide a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils that builds effectively on their knowledge, understanding and skills. The provision is stimulating and provides good opportunities for pupils to learn through authentic experiences, about their local area and Wales.

Most lessons engage pupils effectively and teaching ensures that all pupils collaborate well with each other. Although teachers use a suitable range of teaching methods in their classes, they do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and there are few opportunities for pupils to become independent learners. The use of the outdoor learning area from nursery to Year 2 is underdeveloped.

There is a strong sense of teamwork at the school, and the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors work together positively. Leaders set in place positive strategies to improve pupils' skills and have placed well-being at the heart of the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop the outdoor learning provision for pupils from nursery to Year 2
- R2 Provide opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills and make decisions in relation to their learning
- R3 Ensure that teachers' feedback supports pupils to take the next steps in their learning

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Pupils who have additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals progress well in relation to their individual targets.

Overall, the majority of pupils have suitable speaking skills when they start in the school. As they develop confidence, pupils in the nursery class can talk about their favourite fruits and discuss simply the most efficient way to transport water from one vessel to another. By Year 2, most pupils make worthwhile contributions in group sessions, showing a sound understanding of the difference between natural and man-made features on the coast. Pupils continue to build on their oracy skills successfully as they move across the school. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils are articulate speakers. They respond maturely to each other's suggestions and ideas in class. Overall, pupils' use of their oracy skills across the school is highly effective.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They contribute enthusiastically and expand their vocabulary appropriately during regular Helpwr Heddiw sessions. On the whole, most pupils understand and respond appropriately to instructions and commands throughout the day. However, by Year 6, pupils' use of spoken Welsh is limited and they lack confidence when engaging in simple conversations.

Across the school, most pupils develop their reading skills appropriately and apply them purposefully to support their learning. Most younger pupils develop sound phonics skills and decode unfamiliar words confidently. By Year 2, many pupils show a good understanding of what they have read and make sensible predictions about what might happen next in a story. Most pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 can read books appropriate to their age and ability well. They use research skills effectively and scan text for information confidently. However, overall, pupils' enjoyment of reading and their knowledge of a range of authors is less well developed.

Often from low starting points, most pupils progress successfully in developing their writing skills, achieving a high standard by the time they reach Year 6. Pupils in Year 2 develop their creative writing skills well, producing interesting book reviews and detailed fact files about dolphins. As they progress through the school, most pupils create extended written pieces in a variety of genres effectively. For example, pupils in Year 6 skilfully write a formal letter to the local member of parliament and compose poetry to remember those who lost their lives in the war, showing exceptional sensitivity. Most pupils apply their writing skills well in work across the curriculum.

Most pupils make sound progress in developing their understanding of a range of mathematical concepts. They recall previous learning successfully, develop purposeful methods of calculation and apply these confidently to discrete problem-solving activities. For example, Year 6 pupils measure the height of their classmates and length of their jumps accurately and use this information purposefully to compare whether the tallest pupil has the longest jump. Most pupils understand that data can be presented in a variety of forms, such as graphs and charts. In general, they interpret basic information from sets of data appropriately. However, they do not always make the progress they could in developing their data handling skills. This is largely due to a lack of planning for the progressive development of these skills.

Across the school most pupils' digital skills are developing appropriately and they have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. Most pupils use a range of software confidently to support and record their learning. They use ICT well to research and to communicate information and create interesting presentations to share with their peers. For example, as part of their topic, Year 4 demonstrate a sound understanding of a variety of skills when creating a website about Wales. However, overall, pupils have limited skills to use coding, spreadsheets and databases.

Most pupils' physical skills are developing soundly through a variety of purposeful activities. From nursery to Year 2, they develop their skills well through movement lessons and, for example, using balance bikes in the after-school club. Pupils continue to build on these skills successfully in regular planned lessons and taking part competitively with other schools. Overall, many pupils are developing their creative skills purposefully, exploring and experimenting with different media well. They are beginning to appreciate, compose and perform different styles of music suitably. However, pupils do not access the outdoor learning environment often enough to develop their curiosity and independent creative skills.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils throughout the school feel completely secure in a nurturing and inclusive environment that helps them to thrive. They clearly love school and are highly engaged in their learning. Most pupils are proud of their work and enter enthusiastically into all activities. They sustain concentration and have a very good attitude if they find work difficult, considering this to be a good opportunity to learn.

Pupils' behaviour across the school is exemplary. They are kind and considerate and always ready to help one another. Most pupils show empathy towards others and are very aware of their needs. They relate very well to adults, showing a good understanding of being friendly without lacking respect. Nearly all pupils work very well collaboratively throughout the school, whether in pairs or in larger groups.

Most pupils are very confident to express their views. They listen well to each other and value and respect the contribution of others. For example, the 'First Minister' of the Senedd listens respectfully to any question from a fellow pupil and answers thoughtfully. The school's pupil voice groups are very effective. All pupils, including those from different groups, such as those with ALN and eligible for free school meals, take on leadership roles and responsibilities confidently. A notable feature of pupil voice within the school is the way that pupils hold each other to account on

suggested improvements to the school and community. They give updates on the progress and completion of ideas every half term. For example, a recent successful campaign was to encourage local dog owners to clean up after their dogs. Pupils feel that adults in the school listen to their views and take them into account in decisions that affect them. This is a strength of the school.

Most pupils develop well as ethical, informed citizens in their own community. They consider issues of fairness, equality, sustainability and children's rights maturely. Most pupils develop a clear understanding of the purposes of rules, rewards and sanctions and they can relate these to the wider society, such as the responsibility in the community not to steal or hurt others.

Most pupils develop well as capable learners who acquire a good range of basic skills that give them confidence when tackling new tasks. They contribute ideas well at the beginning of new topics. Most pupils respond well to verbal feedback from staff and they are beginning to evaluate their own work sufficiently. However, the quality of the written feedback does not always support pupils to move their learning forward well enough.

In most of their activities, pupils rely on the teachers to direct them in their learning. As a result, many pupils do not use their well-developed skills to their fullest extent and do not develop as independent learners as well as they could. Nearly all pupils show resilience and persevere at tasks. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 repeatedly practised demanding lines of music to accompany 'Men of Harlech' on their glockenspiels successfully.

Most pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep healthy through eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise. They know that fruit and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet and enjoy taking part in regular physical activities. Many older pupils take part in a variety of sporting competitions, which build on their skills successfully.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff have built up very positive relationships with pupils based on care, trust and respect. As a result of these strong relationships, behaviour of pupils both in class and around the school is exceptional. Staff are effective role models for pupils and ensure highly effective collaboration in all classes. The school's provision for pupils' personal and social education is thorough and impacts effectively to create a warm and supportive learning environment.

Overall, the school provides a stimulating curriculum, which meets the needs of pupils successfully. Staff have developed a clear vision, which reflects the expectations of Curriculum for Wales well. Teachers plan a good range of engaging termly topics that support good progress in the pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Staff share their expertise in music and art successfully to enhance pupils' learning.

In class, teachers create a positive ethos for learning. They give clear explanations in lessons that enable pupils to undertake their work confidently. Pupils build on their previous learning through a range of stimulating authentic learning experiences. For

example, following a visit to Caerphilly castle, Year 2 organised an art exhibition of their castle paintings. They donated the money raised to a charity that protects the historic environment of Wales, deepening pupils' knowledge of their heritage well. Most activities match well to pupils' abilities, and teaching assistants are organised effectively to support pupils' learning. However, overall, there is too much directed teaching across the school, which limits the pupils' ability to develop as independent learners.

Planning and teaching ensure that pupils acquire a good range of literacy skills. Pupils' oracy skills are a strength and pupils read and write for specific purposes confidently. Teachers develop pupils' discrete numeracy skills well, although there are limited opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in other areas of learning. Where teaching is most effective, staff model the Welsh language purposefully and roles such as Helpwr Heddiw help the development of the Welsh language suitably. However, on the whole, the staff use Welsh inconsistently, which impacts on the pupils' use of Welsh in informal situations outside of specific Welsh language lessons. In most lessons, staff use a range of ICT resources suitably to support pupils' learning. However, teachers' planning does not ensure that pupils build a full range of digital skills on their skills systematically, particularly the older pupils.

The school provides extensive extra-curricular activities, which successfully extends pupils' experiences and skills well. For example, many pupils enjoy attending the school choir club, where they develop confidence and collaborate with each other successfully. In addition, numerous visitors to the school enhance the curriculum for the pupils and inspire them about future careers. A regular live video link with an author develops pupils' ideas when writing, and a visit from people who work for a sea rescue organisation deepens the pupils' understanding of this important lifesaving role.

Overall, the school make effective use of assessment procedures to track the progress of learners. In addition, teachers regularly collaborate to ensure that progression is clearly evident in pupils' books as they move through the school. During lessons, teachers regularly make constructive comments about pupils' work and are beginning to provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to assess their own progress. However, the verbal and written feedback provided for pupils does not support them well enough to improve their work.

Staff are beginning to develop pupils' curiosity, creative and independent skills from the nursery class to Year 2. However, the quality of provision is inconsistent and has a tendency to be too structured. The use of outdoor learning for these classes is underdeveloped.

Care, support and guidance

Staff collaborate effectively to ensure that pupils' well-being is a main priority and to respond sensitively to their needs. This supportive ethos helps pupils to feel safe and cared for. It contributes notably to their positive attitudes to school.

The school provides effective support for pupils with ALN. Teachers identify pupils who would benefit from extra support carefully and work closely with the ALN lead to consider what type of support would be most beneficial. As a result, teaching

assistants provide a range of activities to improve pupils' skills, such as speech and language. In addition, teachers plan well to support pupils with ALN in class, which also has a positive impact on helping pupils make good progress toward their individual goals.

The school has strong processes to help support pupils' well-being. These include a variety of nurture support sessions that focus well on developing pupils' confidence and social skills. This helps to develop pupils' confidence to engage in school life. The school works positively with external specialists, such as educational psychologists. More recently the school has introduced a weekly drop-in session with an adviser from the health service, which provides beneficial support to the pupils and their families.

Leaders and staff provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to contribute to the life of the school. The numerous pupil voice groups have a positive impact on school life through the Senedd, who take responsibility for decision-making and respond positively to scrutiny from their peers. For example, the health and safety group ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of how to look after themselves. They have organised a visit from an outside agent to enhance the pupils' knowledge of first aid, in particular to perform CPR. In addition, the school has purposeful arrangements to support pupils to learn about the importance of healthy eating and drinking, and online safety.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to benefit from physical exercise through a number of regular PE lessons and sport clubs. These help pupils to improve their understanding of how to stay fit and remain healthy. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, such as the graffiti club and mindfulness session, to develop their thinking and social skills effectively. In addition, they contribute positively to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Stimulating themes and educational visits develop pupils' understanding of Welsh identity, heritage and culture well. For example, staff plan valuable opportunities for pupils to visit historic structures, including the old bridge in Pontypridd. In addition, they teach pupils about local people, their stories and achievements such as Guto Nyth Bran and Dr Elaine Morgan well, which develops their sense of 'cynefin'. The school makes good use of a residential trip to an outward-bound centre, which provides a valuable opportunity for pupils to use the Welsh language, to engage in challenging physical activities and to work with others as part of a team. Staff also provide a range of opportunities for the pupils to engage with interesting visitors. A local artist, now resident in New Zealand, supports and enhances the pupils' creative skills successfully via a live stream video link.

Staff enable pupils to develop an empathy for the challenges that face members of the local community, for example, through class discussions about tackling the poverty crisis and establishing a food bank at the school. Through numerous activities in class, pupils gain a sound understanding about different faiths. Staff encourage pupils to regularly ask questions to further develop their thinking. These lead to interesting discussions on how Christianity has changed and how different faiths have their own versions of the creation. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and other's beliefs and for pupils to learn about equality and diversity.

There is a robust culture of safeguarding at the school. The school's procedures for monitoring attendance and pupils who arrive late are appropriate. Leaders contact parents promptly to discuss any concerns and use the local authority's attendance and welfare officer, when necessary. As a result of the school's focus and thorough procedures, attendance levels are beginning to improve.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, has communicated a clear vision for the school, which focuses on the importance of the well-being of each pupil and sets high expectations of how pupils behave and relate to one another. Leaders place a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning to meet pupils' needs.

The governing body is highly supportive of the school and challenges school leaders successfully as a critical friend. Governors have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. For example, they identify assessment and feedback to pupils as an aspect that the school has prioritised. In order to support the well-being of pupils from low-income families, the governors have established a beneficial anti-poverty committee to help reduce the cost of sending pupils to school. They purposefully oversee the school's use of the pupil development grant and ensure that all pupils have access to school uniform and school activities such as swimming lessons. Governors work well to ensure that the school has the appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. They fulfil their statutory obligations well.

Leaders ensure that staff understand and promote a robust safeguarding culture. They set high expectations for staff, pupils and themselves. They have developed an enthusiastic, engaged team of teachers and support staff who are very committed and competent. Leaders model and promote professional values and behaviours well and contribute positively to school improvement. They promote highly effective collaboration between staff by enabling staff to work and observe each other teach, for example.

Leaders distribute staff roles and responsibilities effectively. Staff work together and support each other positively, and relationships between staff are warm and effective. A particular strength is the way that teaching assistants join with teachers in leading different areas of learning and experience. Leaders also manage financial resources effectively. They take due account of the balance between meeting short-term needs and those that will benefit the school in the longer term. The school makes effective use of educational grants to fund extra staff to focus on improving pupils' basic skills. They ensure that vulnerable pupils and those eligible for free school meals make good progress from their starting points.

The headteacher has a range of effective activities for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. As a result, all staff have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Over time, leaders have shown the capacity to implement improvement strategy successfully, for example improving the mathematical skills of all pupils. Leaders address national priorities well. They have adapted the school's provision for pupils with ALN effectively to support their progress. Although leaders are beginning to plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to

develop their Welsh language skills in formal and informal situations, it is too early to see its full effect on provision, standards and pupils' progress. In addition, monitoring by staff occasionally fails to recognise an area for improvement, such as the need for consistency in the development of pupils' digital skills.

Leaders have created a positive culture and ethos to promote and support the professional learning of all staff. Professional learning to improve teaching has had a strong impact in developing a number of good features of teaching. For example, the training for curriculum design has resulted in teachers' planning that includes authentic contexts, inspiring visitors and strong community links.

Positive relationships with parents and the wider community support pupils' learning and well-being effectively. Staff help parents to support their own children's learning effectively. For example, well-attended parents' workshops cover cooking, early teaching of reading and incidental Welsh. Regular surveys allow parents to give the school valuable feedback that changes policy and practice in school.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

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

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Publication date: 26/07/2023