



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

A report on

Hengoed Primary School

**Chapel Terrace
Hengoed
CF82 7JU**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Hengoed Primary School

Name of provider	Hengoed Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Not applicable
Number of pupils on roll	176
Pupils of statutory school age	133
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%)	39.6%
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%)	20.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/10/2014
Start date of inspection	05/06/2023
The executive headteacher is the headteacher of a nearby school.	

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

Pupils enjoy learning and are enthusiastic during lessons and in activities around the school. This is mainly due to the positive working relationships that they have with their teachers and other staff. There is a very caring and inclusive atmosphere at the school and staff ensure that pupils are the integral element of daily school life.

The school environment promotes successful learning opportunities. Learning is promoted well in classrooms and in the outdoors and this provision is equitable across the school. Learning is particularly successful where the teaching is purposeful and consistent, and challenges pupils to perform at their best.

Where teaching is most effective, it helps pupils to make strong progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and digital skills, and they achieve well from their starting points. However, staff do not always allow pupils to use their independent skills often enough.

All staff promote a positive ethos of support and care for pupils in all areas of the school. This encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own well-being and behaviour extremely well. The school helps pupils to build confidence in themselves as individuals, while also developing strong respect for the feelings of others. As a result, pupils support each other, develop resilience and persevere with challenging tasks.

Leaders evaluate the school's work to plan for improvements thoroughly and the strategic leadership of the governing body is satisfactory. The executive headteacher provides strong and effective leadership, with a determination to succeed for the benefit of pupils and the community. The senior leadership team and the staff share his purposeful vision, and they work together well to ensure that the school is successful.

The executive headteacher shares responsibilities effectively among staff and provides strong opportunities for professional learning, such as improving inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This contributes to a thriving whole-school ethos, where staff and pupils feel valued for their contributions to school life.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that the new leadership practices improve the consistency and effectiveness of teaching across the school
- R2 Provide better opportunities to promote pupils' independent skills
- R3 Improve the strategic leadership of the governing body

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils enter the school with levels that are below those expected for their age. During their time in school many pupils make good progress in developing a range of skills. By the end of Year 6, many pupils use their literacy, numeracy and digital skills effectively, including many pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals.

Most pupils develop their speaking and listening skills purposefully as they move through the school. The youngest pupils are keen to chat with their teachers and with visitors. They talk enthusiastically about what they are doing, such as when reception pupils discuss sensibly how they use paint rollers to create pictures of bees. By the age of seven, many pupils converse well with peers and adults. For example, Year 1 pupils share ideas well on the materials needed to replicate the building of igloos. Most Year 6 pupils speak confidently about their work and they listen carefully to questions before answering them eloquently. For example, they take great pride in their research on polar explorers and their short animations on the life of Edgar Evans, which they present innovatively using green screen technology.

Many pupils develop good reading skills. Younger pupils acquire an understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds quickly. They enjoy looking at a wide range of books and electronic materials and develop positive attitudes to reading. By Year 2, many pupils' reading skills are secure, and they use a variety of strategies successfully to read unfamiliar words. By Year 4, many pupils are becoming accomplished readers and they read expressively, such as when reading Welsh folk tales, such as Gelert, to each other. By Year 6, many pupils can skim, and scan read easily, and they have good comprehension skills, which they use effectively in their research on King Charles III's recent coronation.

Many pupils develop effective writing skills. The youngest children enjoy mark making and writing opening times in 'Shani's Shop'. They embrace the regular and effective opportunities to develop their independent writing skills. By Year 2, many pupils can write a sequence of simple sentences and use basic punctuation and grammar accurately. Many older pupils write coherently in a range of genres, such as newspaper articles on natural disasters and persuasive letters on global warming. Many pupils enjoy the writing process. They write effectively at length and present and edit their work purposefully.

Most younger pupils develop their Welsh language skills appropriately. They sing greeting songs and respond to simple requests and commands. For example, they enjoy singing about different animals and the times of the day. As they move through

the school, most pupils develop suitable Welsh skills and use very basic sentence structures and vocabulary to talk about themselves and their feelings. A minority of pupils are keen to conduct simple conversations and greetings with visitors in Welsh.

Many pupils develop their mathematical understanding and numeracy skills well as they move through the school. The youngest pupils develop their knowledge of number through rhymes and songs and outdoor learning opportunities. By Year 2, many pupils calculate the answers to number problems using two-digit numbers confidently. Older pupils use number operations successfully and develop successful data handling skills. For example, older pupils draw accurate line graphs to compare the temperatures in the Arctic circle with Wales. Many pupils apply their numeracy skills well across the curriculum, such as populating databases and spreadsheets during a healthy lifestyle survey.

Most pupils develop strong digital skills, and they use these across the curriculum successfully. They use a range of software and devices, including word processing, coding, spreadsheets and multimedia presentations. For example, in Year 5, pupils create presentations on the theme of diversity and disability based on the lives of different people in the community. Most pupils email effectively and nearly all pupils use digital devices and educational games to develop and reinforce their literacy and numeracy skills successfully.

Most pupils develop their creative skills well. The youngest pupils enjoy making gardens using two and three-dimensional shapes, whilst older pupils play a range of instruments, such as guitars, and sing in the school choir expressively. Most pupils take on challenges and complete them to the best of their ability. As a result, they develop sound problem-solving skills, such as when Year 3 pupils plan the quantity of ingredients needed to create a cake.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils are happy and enjoy school. They feel valued and show pride in their school community within its inclusive and caring ethos. Across the school, nearly all pupils have positive relationships with staff. They believe that staff listen to their voices and opinions, particularly in relation to their own learning.

Nearly all pupils behave very well. They walk calmly around the school and welcome visitors in a polite and courteous manner, for example holding doors open for each other and adults. Most pupils collaborate well and respect the contributions of others. They play together enthusiastically, take turns and support each other effectively while playing games and socialising during break times. A good example of this is when the younger pupils work together to build a minibeast habitat using bricks.

Most pupils engage well with others when working in small groups or pairs and have positive attitudes to learning. They are ambitious and show strong interest in their work. They talk confidently and maturely about the rich range of learning experiences that the school provides for them. For example, older pupils are well motivated when creating a story animation following a visit from a Welsh author. Most pupils sustain concentration for appropriate lengths of time and show good levels of resilience when working in class. They are keen to please their teachers when completing their tasks and many pupils' ability to work independently is appropriate.

Most pupils respond positively to verbal and written feedback from staff. For example, they redraft their writing and evaluate and reflect on their learning effectively. Most pupils respond maturely to support provided by their peers. This includes Year 6 pupils providing feedback to other year groups on how to improve the quality of their work. Such advice includes varying the pace and tone of their presentations on the water cycle and inspirational role models.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They know who to go to if they are worried or upset, and they feel that staff look after them well. Nearly all pupils can clearly explain their school rules of being 'Ready, Responsible and Respectful' and feel that these promote good behaviour and build friendships across the school. Most pupils have a strong awareness of how to stay safe online and they remind each other sensibly that they should not share passwords.

Nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of eating and drinking healthily and feel that the school gives them plenty of opportunities for exercise. Most pupils engage in daily physical activities readily, such as when they play foot golf, netball and access the trim trail on the playground.

Many pupils are involved in leadership roles, which have a positive impact on the life of the school. For example, the sports ambassadors promote Mental Health Week through organising a fitness timetable for all classes. Additionally, the eco committee lead and encourage recycling practices through organising a battery hunt and arranging a fashion show of recycled clothing. The pupils engage in their roles responsibly and they are keen to further develop their impact as ethical informed citizens. For example, the eco committee supports a charitable project in the local community to redistribute food to families in need. Older pupils explore the issues of global warming well and the negative impact that deforestation and pollution have on the environment. The whole school also participates in regular litter picks and pupils run a shop to recycle school uniform.

Across the school, most pupils develop their enterprising skills purposefully. For example, older pupils converted a shed to create 'Y Caban Iach', in order to sell healthy snacks. The pupils calculate accurately the prices for their sale items as well as planning how much paint they needed to decorate the outer walls. As a result, most pupils develop a good understanding of basic business skills, such as how to manage profit and loss and how to apply these skills in real-life contexts.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum. As a result, most pupils enjoy coming to school. Staff work effectively to provide opportunities for pupils to connect their school learning to the real world. For example, pupils visit the BBC Wales studios to inspire their development of their own 'Viaduct Voice' school radio service. Provision for such technologies is a strength through the school. This allows pupils, particularly in Year 6, to develop a range of advanced digital skills, such as mixing media, editing and broadcasting.

Many teachers plan carefully to build on pupils' prior learning and make appropriate use of their suggestions when planning curriculum themes. For example, pupils contribute to and explore big questions such as 'What does it take to become elite in

sport?' They then gain valuable learning experiences by interviewing those who have excelled in sport. As a result, pupils understand the importance of diet, hard work and training if they are to achieve the highest standards.

Pupils' learning is enriched by a range of lunch and afterschool clubs, such as choir, netball and street dance. Visiting specialists extend pupils' thinking, for example posing problems such as when to 'castle' in chess. Staff make appropriate use of the school grounds to develop pupils' knowledge of caring for the environment and living sustainably. Younger pupils, for example, make bird feeders, and grow vegetables and fruit in the planting areas. Older pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenge of converting an outdoor shed into a health food café and learn entrepreneurial skills such as budgeting and forecasting.

Throughout the school, there is a calm, purposeful and orderly learning environment. The school is clean and well organised. Most staff make effective use of different indoor and outdoor spaces to engage pupils and visitors purposefully. For example, wall displays typically include QR codes showcasing examples of what pupils can do well across the curriculum.

Most teachers share clear learning objectives and what pupils need to do to achieve these. In the most impactful practice, they engage pupils through imaginative strategies and resources such as word games to learn new vocabulary. However, staff over-direct pupils during tasks. Across the curriculum, teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to discuss each other's work and how this can improve, for example when Year 6 pupils suggest how to construct sturdy shelving units. However, on occasion, there is a lack of variety in teachers' pace, questioning skills and approaches to ensure that pupils' learning progresses effectively. This restricts opportunities for pupils to learn and think independently.

The school has effective systems for monitoring the progress of pupils and staff use data effectively to plan appropriate interventions. Many teachers provide timely oral and written feedback to help pupils understand what and how they can improve their learning. At the start of the day, older pupils are expected to track and review their own progress through their own portfolios or 'Learning Journeys'. These illustrate pupils' ambitions as learners, and many reflect on their learning in a thoughtful manner. Occasionally, however, pupils' targets are too broad and as a result they are uncertain about how and when they can achieve these.

The school provides comprehensive information to parents through annual reports, collaborative workshops and channels such as social media.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a very caring, warm and inclusive community. Staff know their pupils very well and provide high levels of care, support and guidance. For example, the school has a dedicated well-being team, based in a 'Well-being Wing', where they provide an enriched programme of support and guidance. As a result, pupils feel safe, secure and confident enough to talk through their worries. They value and respond well to the support they receive.

The school is very much part of the community. For example, it provides a programme of regular workshops on a range of subjects such as the value of nursery rhymes, story reading and craftwork. These are very well attended by parents, who value opportunities to see how their children learn at school and what they can do to help at home. Such provision builds close relationships in the community and contributes well to pupils' sense of belonging.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to stay healthy through regular exercise, and activities which highlight the need to eat and drink sensibly. Staff also place a strong emphasis on teaching pupils to look after themselves. For example, younger pupils know that they should wear a helmet when cycling or working in their outdoor construction area. Additionally, older classes talk sensibly about responding to wide-ranging dangers such as bullying, substance abuse and online identity fraud.

Staff promote the importance of emotional and mental health very effectively throughout the school. For example, teachers in the younger classes use props such as puppets and other artefacts to discuss feelings. Older pupils prepare their own podcasts as part of a national campaign to raise awareness of mental health.

Provision for pupils identified as having ALN is effective. The school's ALN co-ordinator liaises with a range of outside specialist agencies where appropriate to ensure that pupils' individual needs are identified, monitored and well supported. A bespoke curriculum is having a positive impact in building pupils' overall confidence, self-esteem and attitudes to learning. Through the school, teachers provide resources and deploy teaching assistants effectively to ensure that pupils are well supported in areas such as reading, mathematics and personal development. These arrangements ensure that most targeted pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities.

The school provides effective care and support for pupils during important milestones, including their transition from home to school, from pre-school settings to the nursery class and when moving on to secondary school. For example, older pupils enjoy participating in an International Language project when they learn about musical maps, Chinese craftwork and making French crêpes.

One of the school's strengths is its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff make the most of current events to broaden pupils' knowledge of different cultures. For example, they plan a 'Eurovision' song contest in which all classes learn about the food, language, music and customs of different European countries. The school also ensures that pupils learn about and value the work of local people. Through its community superheroes project, for example, younger pupils make cards and biscuits for refuse collectors. Acts of collective worship reinforce pupils' understanding of values. For example, nearly all pupils listen attentively to personal stories about the role of young carers and how to show that they care for others.

Staff promote equal opportunities well and create an environment in which pupils feel comfortable about discussing such rights as religious freedom and tackling gender and other stereotypes. Most older pupils, including those with additional learning needs, revel in the challenge of singing a hymn using sign language.

Staff encourage pupils to take on leadership responsibilities effectively by participating in various committees. As a result, pupils learn what it means to be a good citizen by contributing towards improvements in school and community life. For example, members of the eco committee collect old batteries and take these to a nearby supermarket for recycling.

The school provides a range of valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the locality. For example, younger pupils learn about locally produced honey and make honey cakes, while older classes share local news stories on the school radio. There is also a strong emphasis through the school on promoting an understanding of national culture and heritage. The 'Wonderful Wales' project, for example, helps pupils appreciate what makes the people and land of Wales so special. Class visits to various sites, such as the Museum of Welsh Life, provide stimulating opportunities to learn about the traditions of Wales. Staff also promote pupils' awareness of how Black people have contributed to advances in medicine, engineering and other areas of life.

The school's processes for monitoring attendance are efficient and are beginning to improve attendance and punctuality of a very few pupils. Staff communicate well with each other to support pupils. This includes understanding their roles in keeping pupils safe and maintaining the school's strong inclusive ethos. As a result, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher works diligently with the deputy headteacher to implement improvements in the school's strategic and day-to-day practices. Alongside the school's new senior leadership team, they identify important areas to improve. This supports beneficial developments in the school's provision, which impacts positively on pupils' outcomes.

Leaders, with the support of the governors, focus on placing the school at the centre of its community. They set the well-being of pupils and their families at the heart of their vision and promote the school motto of 'Learning together to be our best' successfully. The staff support this philosophy and apply it to their roles effectively. As a result, leaders ensure that a caring and supportive ethos exists throughout the school, which the pupils embrace willingly. This promotes inclusivity purposefully and has a positive effect on pupils' readiness to learn.

The executive headteacher, with the approval of the governors, allocates roles of responsibility effectively. As a result, the new members of the leadership team are beginning to hold staff to account sensibly for the quality and impact of their work. They use the findings of monitoring activities rigorously to evaluate the quality of the school's provision. This includes addressing shortcomings in the effectiveness and consistency of teaching and developing a common understanding of high expectations amongst staff.

The school's self-evaluation processes are effective. They provide the executive headteacher and senior leaders with a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. The link between self-evaluation activities and improvement

planning is accurate. Leaders use the findings effectively and set purposeful targets to move the school forward.

Leaders' processes to evaluate the effectiveness of provision are thorough and based on a wide range of first-hand evidence. For example, systems to improve the impact of the school's provision include detailed scrutiny of pupils' books and analysing internal and external data on pupils' progress. Additionally, leaders regularly gather the views of other stakeholders about the school to inform their practices. For example, they consider the views of parents and carers and act on any findings promptly, such as running workshops for parents to create a guide for the school community on anti-bullying.

Governors are supportive of the school and their regular input promotes sensible discussions and systematic improvements under the guidance of the executive headteacher. They are very supportive of the new leadership team and work with them willingly. They are beginning to question the impact of the school's work as critical friends. However, the strategic leadership of the governing body is not fully effective. They are over-reliant on the executive headteacher and the senior leadership team to drive, monitor and evaluate initiatives at the school.

Leaders use reliable evidence to inform governors about pupils' learning in termly meetings. They advise them realistically and honestly on how to improve provision, such as the need to improve pupils' writing skills and the school's outdoor provision. Governors undertake learning walks and discuss pupils' work with teachers to develop a first-hand understanding of the school's activities. Governors monitor the budget carefully and ensure that spending decisions are in line with the school's priorities for improvement, such as developing the 'Well-being Wing'.

Leaders keep in close contact with the wider school community and with vulnerable families. They build on the strong relationships that exist with parents and support them effectively. This includes attending meetings with support agencies and pre-school settings. Governors ensure that pupils eat and drink healthily and advise parents on the importance of nutritious food in their lunch boxes. In addition, they share the school's safeguarding culture with all staff robustly.

Leaders ensure that staff make the best use of the premises and the school grounds, which includes empowering the caretaker to lead on creating a vibrant and stimulating learning environment. For example, they enhance the outdoor learning opportunities effectively with growing beds and adventure equipment. Leaders allocate stimulating resources in the classrooms and use pupil development grants wisely to provide specific interventions across the school by staff. As a result, the teaching assistants provide beneficial support to improve pupils' learning.

The executive headteacher ensures that staff access effective learning opportunities to support their professional development that match their individual needs. These link well with school development priorities. The school shares effective practices with its partner primary school. This provides valuable opportunities for teachers to compare and share their practice with other professionals. As a result, the professional learning opportunities support the school's capacity for continuous improvement beneficially.

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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