



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

A report on

Cilffriw Primary School

**Main Road
Cilfrew
Neath
SA10 8LF**

Date of inspection: November 2023

by

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

About Cilffriw Primary School

Name of provider	Cilffriw Primary School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	194
Pupils of statutory school age	157
Number in nursery classes	19
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%)	23.8%
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%)	26.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	7
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	02/06/2015
Start date of inspection	20/11/2023

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

Pupils at Cilffriw Primary School enjoy coming to school and are happy and well behaved. Despite this, senior leaders and governors need to strengthen the school's safeguarding culture.

The school has an appropriate vision to develop pupils as independent learners who achieve well. However the quality of teaching is too variable and teachers do not have high enough expectations of the standards that pupils can achieve. They do not use ongoing assessment data well enough to help plan next steps in pupils' learning. As a result, too many pupils do not make the progress they are capable of and do not develop the skills needed to become effective independent learners. Pupils' standards in Welsh and digital competence are particularly weak. In addition, teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful and authentic contexts.

Provision for pupils in the specialist classes is good. Teachers use a variety of different teaching methods to engage pupils with their work. As a result, all pupils in these classes make strong progress. However, the progress of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) in mainstream classes is too inconsistent.

The school has recently revised its planning to implement the Curriculum for Wales. There is now greater consistency in teaching approaches, but too often staff do not build systematically on pupils' existing knowledge and skills in learning activities that they plan.

Senior leaders are committed to the school. However there are serious shortcomings in the way that they plan strategically to improve the school. Senior leaders do not ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly distributed and communication, particularly with parents, is inadequate.

Senior leaders do not monitor and evaluate the work of the school in a systematic way or use the findings well enough to make improvements. As a result, they do not always identify and address important shortcomings in the school's work quickly enough. Senior leaders and governors do not have an appropriate overview of how they are ensuring that pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low income households are making appropriate progress.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen safeguarding arrangements and address the safeguarding and health and safety issues identified during the inspection
- R2 Improve strategic leadership at all levels
- R3 Improve teachers' use of on-going assessment to inform appropriate next steps in pupils' learning and to challenge pupils to achieve to the best of their ability

R4 Improve provision for the teaching of and the progressive development of pupils' skills

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

Main evaluation

Learning

When they start school in the nursery class, many pupils' speech, communication and social skills are at a level below those expected for their age. While a minority of pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points during their time at the school, the progress of the majority is inconsistent. Consequently, they do not achieve appropriate standards in important aspects of their learning, such as literacy, numeracy and digital competence. All pupils in the specialist classes make strong progress in improving their social skills and develop the confidence to communicate with each other and adults successfully. However, only around half of pupils with ALN in mainstream classes make suitable progress towards their individual targets. The progress of pupils eligible for free school meals is too variable.

Most nursery pupils settle into school routines quickly and begin to join in with the many purposeful opportunities adults provide for them to develop their personal, social and communication skills. Through rhymes and songs, and successful modelling of language, they gain confidence to talk during their play. By reception, most pupils listen to each other well and take turns to speak. In the specialist classes, pupils contribute well to group discussions and respect each other's views. When they reach Year 6, many pupils speak confidently and enjoy sharing ideas with their peers and adults. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to extend their listening and speaking skills by exploring, presenting and debating issues, or by taking on different roles in group activities.

Many pupils develop their reading skills appropriately. Younger pupils enjoy listening to stories and develop suitable knowledge of the relationships between letters and sounds to read age-appropriate texts. Older pupils enjoy visiting Year 2 classrooms to share books with them. They listen to and join in with younger pupils' reading, asking them questions to check their understanding and offering support with strategies to tackle unfamiliar words. By Year 6, many pupils read fluently with appropriate expression and understanding. They infer and deduce ideas and information suitably and use the organisational features of non-fiction texts to support their research. However, in general, older pupils' advanced reading skills, such as learning to appreciate an author's style or summarise information from a range of sources, are not well-developed.

The youngest pupils develop appropriate early writing behaviours. They communicate by making marks, for instance when organising a list of appointments at the vet's clinic in the role play area. From these early experiences, a majority of pupils make suitable progress in developing their writing skills. By Year 2, using frameworks, they write short pieces for an appropriate range of purposes. A majority of pupils have a reasonable sense of how to construct sentences with full stops. However, their letter formation is often weak and the use of too many worksheets limit the development of their writing skills.

Older pupils enjoy writing for real purposes and many organise their writing suitably, for example using paragraphs and appropriate connectives. A few pupils present their writing neatly, taking pride in their work. However, many pupils do not develop sound technical writing ability, making frequent spelling and punctuation errors. They do not draw on a wide enough vocabulary or vary their sentence structures to add interest to their writing. Their ability to redraft their writing to improve its quality is not developed well enough.

Many of the younger pupils, including those in the specialist class, understand simple requests in Welsh and often respond assuredly. However, pupils' confidence decreases as they move through the school. Most older pupils do not have secure grasp of basic vocabulary and language patterns, and many do not have positive attitudes towards learning the language.

Most pupils make sound progress in developing their number skills. As they move through the school, many pupils build steadily on this solid foundation. They develop suitable mental agility and use this to solve simple word problems successfully. By Year 5, many pupils explain the methods they use to calculate answers using appropriate vocabulary. However, in all classes, pupils do not develop the full range of mathematical skills and knowledge. Their ability to apply their numeracy skills to real-life contexts, as well as in their work across the curriculum, is limited.

Overall, throughout the school, pupils develop a narrow range of digital skills. For instance, the youngest pupils use tablets to play games to support their early numeracy development. Older pupils create digital presentations to record their learning using basic visual tools but do not advance their skills. However, most pupils' ability to apply their digital skills at an appropriate level to support their learning across the curriculum is weak.

Younger pupils develop their creative skills appropriately. For example, Year 2 pupils explore and experiment with different artistic techniques to produce self-portraits using natural materials found in the school woodlands. However, older pupils do not develop a range of techniques, for instance to produce artwork of sufficiently high quality.

Most pupils develop their physical agility and co-ordination well. They are enthusiastic about sports and other physical activities. For instance, Year 3 pupils use climbing apparatus to develop stamina, control and confidence successfully during their gymnastics lessons.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

There are warm, caring and respectful relationships between pupils and staff at the school. Many pupils are proud of their school and feel valued within its inclusive environment.

Many pupils enjoy sharing their work. They talk about their learning with increasing confidence as they move through the school. For example, older pupils are keen to show letters written to the deputy headteacher to persuade her to choose them as prefects. Nearly all pupils are particularly enthusiastic about their learning stemming from wider curriculum experiences, such as educational visits.

Most pupils behave very well around the school and in class. They move carefully around the extensive site and are caring and helpful to each other. They remain on-task and complete their work when activities are sufficiently engaging and appropriately matched to their needs. Many pupils listen attentively to instructions and complete their learning tasks with suitable concentration. However, many pupils do not develop perseverance nor strive for excellence as too often their work does not sufficiently challenge them. Their learning is often rushed to complete the number of tasks expected in a session.

If they need help with their learning, most pupils know that they should think about the problem or ask a friend before asking an adult. However, around half of pupils rely too heavily on staff to help them. Too many pupils are not aware of the next steps in their learning.

Many pupils feel that staff listen to their views and take them into account when considering decisions that affect them. The inclusive pupil voice groups allow pupils to take a role in the school's decision-making processes. For example, members of the school council have selected new resources to develop play and physical activities during playtimes. They are proud of their roles and seek to develop these further. However, too much direction and control from staff prevent pupils from further developing leadership skills.

Nearly all pupils listen well to the contributions of their peers and care about their feelings. They are becoming increasingly aware of the rights of children around the world. Members of the school council have agreed their own sets of rights for pupils, based on what they believe is important for children. Most pupils cooperate well with each other. However, their collaborative skills are underdeveloped due to the insufficient opportunities to work meaningfully in groups and pairs.

Most pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know not to share their passwords or personal information when working on the internet. They also have a very good understanding of the importance of making healthy decisions. They bring fruit to school for snacks and make healthy choices in their packed lunches and school dinners. Most pupils understand the importance of regular exercise. They enjoy taking part in physical activities at lunchtimes.

Most pupils are aware of their own emotions and express how they are feeling. They trust that adults at the school will support them if needed. A few pupils benefit from a range of emotional well-being support from trained staff.

Pupil attendance improved over the last academic year, including for those eligible for free school meals. It compares favourably to national data. This improvement has continued this year, including a reduction in pupils with persistent absences.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has developed a suitable curriculum vision and planned approaches that align with the principles of Curriculum for Wales. This reflects the school's context and aspects of Wales and the wider world appropriately. Through the development of whole-school topics, staff plan a range of learning experiences that generally provide suitable breadth of learning across the areas of learning and experience. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils in all classes to share their ideas of what they would like to learn and this helps to engage them in their work. The appropriate integration of pupils from the specialist classes every afternoon ensures that they have equitable access to the curriculum.

Staff link visits purposefully to curriculum topics and these enhance pupils' experiences successfully. For example, when exploring the concept of *cynefin* ('belonging'), younger pupils visit local landmarks. However, opportunities for pupils to learn about the history and experiences of black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Wales, and those of LGBTQ+ people are at a very early stage of development. The school has been slow to respond to the mandatory curriculum elements of relationships and sexuality education, and religion, values and ethics.

The school's planning processes identify how the curriculum intends to build on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school. However, staff often do not build systematically and coherently on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills in the learning activities they design. As a result, pupils do not make sufficient progress over time and the quality of the work they produce across the curriculum is often poor. Provision for the progressive development of pupils' cross-curricular skills is weak. There are limited opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in their work across the curriculum and in authentic, real-life contexts. Overall, the school does not make consistent and effective use of its extensive outdoor spaces to support pupils' learning.

The school is developing a positive culture of reading in English. Staff select high-quality books that complement their curriculum topics well and explore age-appropriate themes, such as loneliness and friendship. In all classes, staff are good role models for reading and read aloud daily to pupils.

Provision for pupils' Welsh language skills is underdeveloped. Staff do not promote the Welsh language well enough or help pupils to become secure in using language patterns.

Across the school, there are positive, respectful and professional relationships between staff and pupils. Most teachers create calm and welcoming learning environments with well-established daily routines. In nearly all classes, staff manage

pupils' behaviour effectively. In most cases, there is a relevant focus for pupils' learning and teachers have sound subject knowledge that helps them to explain concepts successfully. Throughout the school, staff provide pupils with suitable practical materials and other useful resources, such as classroom displays, to support their learning.

In a minority of classes, where teaching is consistently sound, teachers use a range of beneficial teaching approaches to meet pupils' needs. A majority of teaching assistants provide helpful support for pupils. However, too often they intervene in pupils' learning too quickly and teachers do not always deploy them effectively, particularly during whole-class introductions.

Staff are exploring a common approach to teaching and learning that aims to provide continuity for pupils as they move through the school and develop them as effective, independent learners. In a few classes, staff develop pupils' skills at an appropriately high level when teaching them in small groups. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning during these sessions. However, overall, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and they do not tailor their teaching approaches well enough to meet pupils' needs across the breadth of the curriculum. In many classes, teachers miss opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge and thinking, and are too slow to address misconceptions that arise when pupils are completing tasks independently. Often, planned independent learning activities do not consolidate pupils' previous learning or extend their skills well enough. During small group teaching, staff tend to direct pupils' learning too much and, as a result, pupils are reluctant to take risks.

When teaching small groups, most staff provide pupils with helpful verbal feedback. However, success criteria are often too easy for pupils to achieve and this limits the progress that they make. While teachers' written feedback praises pupils' efforts, it rarely focuses well enough on helping them to move forward in their learning. Consequently, most pupils are unclear about their next steps.

Currently, the school is too reliant on using a narrow range of assessment information from standardised tests to identify and evaluate pupils' progress in learning. As a result, teachers do not use assessment well enough to inform their day-to-day planning of learning, or to support individual pupils on an ongoing basis.

Care, support and guidance

Staff at Cillfriw Primary School are nurturing and caring towards pupils. They are strong role models for pupils, showing positive values and respect for everyone. However, senior leaders and governors do not ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. There are many shortcomings in the school's work to ensure that all members of the school community pay a high regard to safeguarding pupils. Too many members of staff are not clear about the school's procedures for dealing with child protection concerns and a minority have not received appropriate training. Record keeping, particularly for instances of bullying and behaviour, is inconsistent. Records do not always include details of the school's follow-up actions following an incident, including whether parents have been informed.

The additional needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) has a strong vision for including pupils with ALN in all aspects of the school's work. She has effectively led the introduction of ALN reform and ensures that processes are followed correctly and pupils with ALN have appropriate access to interventions and support. There are effective links with other schools and an appropriate range of external agencies, including the educational psychologist and speech and language therapists. Pupils with ALN have suitable individual development plans and the school ensures that pupils and parents have a strong voice in reviewing and agreeing pupils' targets for improvement. However, the school's systems to track the progress of pupils with ALN are under-developed. As a result, they do not always have an accurate and up-to-date picture of the progress that these pupils make.

The school ensures that pupils in the specialist classes have daily opportunities, when appropriate, to integrate into mainstream provision. However, a majority of teachers do not plan well enough to meet the needs of pupils who need universal provision within their classes.

The school encourages pupils to take on additional roles and responsibilities, especially as they get older. This is inclusive of all pupils, including those pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to be involved in helping in school, such as when older pupils organise sports for younger pupils. However, as many groups are predominantly led by staff, pupils do not have the chance to develop leadership skills well enough.

There is beneficial support and counselling available for pupils who have specific emotional or mental health needs. However, whole-school provision for emotional well-being and mental health is at an early stage of development and is not strategically planned nor monitored.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles and choices well. Staff encourage healthy eating at playtimes and lunchtimes, and through the promotion of sport during lunchtimes and in PE lessons. The school provides pupils with healthy breakfasts at the popular breakfast club. However, the school provides limited opportunities for pupils to extend their skills and learning through clubs and other extra-curricular activities.

The school's provision to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is generally appropriate. Staff give pupils suitable opportunities to participate in performance and events. For example, they teach pupils to sing and to play the recorder and ukulele. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to visit local theatres to view creative performances.

The school has a range of effective processes to help improve attendance. Leaders work closely with their welfare officer to target and improve the attendance of pupils who do not attend school regularly. As a result, attendance has improved over the last year.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders are highly committed to the school. The headteacher has a suitable vision based on his desire to develop pupils as independent learners. Senior leaders communicate this appropriately to staff and pupils.

Although senior leaders have improved many aspects of safeguarding recently, there are still important shortcomings. Senior leaders and governors do not ensure a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school community.

The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, both of whom have extensive responsibilities. There is a lack of distributed leadership and delegation of roles and duties. As a result, senior leaders do not always address important aspects of the school's work well enough or in a timely manner.

Although there are regular staff and leadership meetings, senior leaders do not keep records of discussions and decisions taken. This makes it difficult for them to follow up on agreed actions or hold members of staff to account.

The school relies too heavily on standardised data to measure pupils' progress. Senior leaders do not monitor that teachers' use on-going assessment information well enough to plan for pupils to progress successfully. Senior leaders have not communicated high enough expectations to all staff in relation to the standards that pupils should achieve.

The school links teachers' performance management objectives appropriately to addressing school improvement priorities. However, most objectives are not measurable and processes to judge how well a teacher has met their objectives are weak. Senior leaders do not give individual teachers the opportunity to address personal objectives through performance management.

Governors are supportive of the school and have an appropriate understanding of school priorities for improvement. A few make visits to the school to view practice at first hand. However, they do not use information gained from their visits well enough to share with other governors or to challenge the school to improve. Governors do not have sufficient information on how well the school is addressing poverty, including the progress of pupils eligible for free school meals. Governors ensure that healthy eating and drinking is given due focus in the life of the school.

The school is addressing a few national priorities such as curriculum reform and ALN reform. However, they have not considered other important priorities including improving pupils' Welsh language skills and digital competence well enough.

Senior leaders and governors generally manage budget spending appropriately. They recognise the need to plan long term spending carefully to address predicted falling pupil numbers. Senior leaders have a suitable understanding of the impact of poverty on pupils' progress and welfare. They ensure that the cost of school activities is not a barrier to learning by subsidising school trips. However, they do not evaluate the impact of grant spending on improving the outcomes and well-being of vulnerable pupils.

Senior leaders do not communicate effectively and in a timely manner with stakeholders. Parents are not always made aware of important school changes or issues relating to their children's learning or well-being.

The school uses a range of appropriate monitoring activities that often focus on improving pupils' standards and progress. However, there is no strategic overview to monitor, evaluate and review the work of the school. As a result, leaders do not address important aspects of school improvement in a systematic and a timely manner. Following monitoring activities, staff usually identify relevant aspects for improvement. However, they do not always make the link between the impact of high-quality teaching on improving pupils' standards. Leaders do not share the findings of monitoring with staff well enough. Senior leaders do not consider the views of parents well enough when evaluating the school's work and their processes to gain the views of pupils are underdeveloped.

The school development plan includes appropriate actions to address important areas for improvement that link suitably to self-evaluation findings. Senior leaders allocate resources to ensure that they have the capacity to address these priorities. They evaluate the progress that they are making on addressing their priorities appropriately. Nevertheless, the lack of a strategic overview of how and when they will monitor and judge progress means that they do not always identify all important shortcomings or address weaknesses in a timely manner.

Senior leaders have recently improved a few aspects of the school's work, including improving pupils' ability to explain mathematical thinking. However, they have not identified or addressed many important weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning. For example, they have not recognised the insufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities, or weaknesses in the development of pupils' Welsh skills. The school has not sustained its progress to address nearly all of the recommendations from the last inspection.

Senior leaders have established a culture that recognises the importance of supporting the professional learning of all staff. Leaders link professional learning to addressing school priorities for improvement appropriately. Staff visit other schools to view good practice, but they do not get the chance to watch each other teach within the school to share effective work. Staff in the specialist classes benefit from regular professional development from speech and language therapists to help support their teaching. Senior leaders do not evaluate the impact of professional learning on improving the quality of teaching and learning or in addressing other school improvement priorities. As a result, the impact that professional learning has on securing school improvement is too variable.

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:

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