



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

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

**Gellifaelog Primary School
Penydarren
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 9TJ**

Date of visit: April 2024

by

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

Outcome of visit

Gellifaelog Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

Progress since the last inspection

R1 Develop an engaging curriculum, that builds pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding systematically and enables them to write, speak Welsh, and use their numeracy skills effectively in meaningful contexts

Leaders and teachers have developed a secure understanding of the principles and purposes of Curriculum for Wales. They have worked with pupils and members of the local community to develop a rich and meaningful curriculum that focuses closely on pupils' interests and learning needs.

Teachers now plan engaging learning experiences which are appropriately focussed on the local area, its landscape and the people that contributed to its industrial history. They find effective ways to bring global issues to life, enabling pupils to develop a greater understanding of the world they live in. Younger pupils, for example, respond enthusiastically to the school caretaker's recycling concerns by researching firsthand the impact of waste on the local community. They put plans in place to improve their own actions and explain why they are making changes.

The school has worked successfully to develop a clear strategy for supporting pupils' progress in literacy, numeracy, and digital competence. Teachers create sequences of lessons that enable pupils to make progress in, and across, areas of learning and experience (AoLEs), weaving the cross-curricular skills through the learning appropriately.

Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills in meaningful contexts, and across the school, most pupils make at least expected progress in developing their writing skills. The youngest pupils develop their early writing skills well, readily choosing to write and draw during play-based learning. They develop a growing range of descriptive vocabulary and use their imagination effectively to story-tell through role-play. As they move through the school, pupils develop a range of techniques that improve the quality of their work and engage the reader. Pupils in Year 2 use adjectives and adverbs effectively in their poetry and begin to write stories with a clear narrative that develop both settings and characters. Older pupils use emotive language and synonyms to add interest to their work and by

the time they reach Year 6 many pupils write confidently to entertain, inform, and persuade. Although younger pupils develop their handwriting well, older pupils do not always present their work neatly.

Across the school, pupils build on their Welsh language skills appropriately. Staff use Welsh effectively throughout the day to provide a breadth of experience for all pupils. Pupils develop confidence in asking and answering questions and often extend their answers to include relevant details.

The school has focused appropriately on improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge in an increasing range of meaningful contexts and as a result, many pupils make good progress in developing their numeracy skills. Pupils in Year 1 record the findings of a survey in tally charts and transfer these to bar charts. Pupils in Year 3 order dates accurately when creating timelines in their work on the industrial revolution. Older pupils gather information on their sleep patterns, calculating averages. They use digital programmes to present population studies through tables and line graphs.

R2 Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils should learn, know, and understand

Most teachers have developed suitably high expectations of what pupils should learn, know, and understand. Many teachers engage pupils in a range of meaningful learning experiences that enable pupils to develop their skills and knowledge at an appropriately challenging level. Most teaching assistants support pupils effectively in their learning.

In the younger classes, learning experiences are often related to pupils' fascinations and interests. Pupils enjoy learning through imaginative play, and many make good progress in a wide range of skills. In the older classes, many teachers often plan learning thoughtfully, enabling pupils to make sense of their learning and relating it to their own life experiences. For example, pupils in Year 4 explore the impact of deforestation on the lives of people across the world and how their food choices can make a difference. Pupils in Year 6 appreciate purposeful opportunities to investigate and understand their rich heritage through their work on the Merthyr Rising. In a very few lessons, teaching does not engage pupils well enough. In these lessons, pupils do not always make the progress they should.

Teachers and leaders have used the principles underpinning the non-maintained curriculum to transform the learning environment to better enable learning for younger pupils. Teachers now plan a purposeful range of activities indoors and outdoors and use the environment well to develop independent learning and language skills. The youngest pupils confidently explore learning through a variety of intriguing resources, making choices that develop and consolidate a wide range of

skills. Staff support pupils to make links in their learning and pupils often draw on their home experiences, for example when baking chocolate cake in the mud kitchen.

Most teachers are developing pupils successfully as independent learners. Pupils engage well and often contribute their ideas enthusiastically. They seek out the resources they need to enhance their learning. For example, pupils in Year 3 use dictionaries to help them choose appropriate vocabulary when creating playscripts designed to persuade others to reduce waste. Older pupils clearly explain how they have improved their work and, with support, think about their next steps in learning. They recognise for example where they may have made errors and use a variety of strategies to correct these.

Across the school, staff interact purposefully with pupils, often observing and knowing where to intervene to move learning forward. In most lessons, teachers make their expectations clear to pupils and provide clear instructions and explanations. They use questioning well to consolidate ideas and move learning on appropriately. Pupils are beginning to use the school's 'steps to success' to assess and improve their work. In a very few lessons, these steps are too challenging for pupils, and teachers do not always check for understanding sufficiently well.

R3 Embed leadership at all levels to realise the school's priorities for improvement successfully

The school's leadership structure is now well-established, and this has been pivotal in moving the school forward considerably since the core inspection. The roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders are clearly defined and understood by all members of the school community. Leaders have high aspirations for the school and its pupils. Over time, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have brought together a team of staff with a common purpose and shared aims. Staff work together productively and with passion to realise the school's priorities for improvement. They are committed to improving pupil outcomes by offering high quality learning experiences in a range of nurturing, creative and vibrant environments.

The school's extensive professional learning programme for staff over the last year has included bespoke events and visits to other schools to observe and share practice. These experiences have enhanced the teaching and leadership skills of staff at all levels and enabled them to carry out their roles more effectively. This has had a considerable impact on the school's capacity to identify and address areas for improvement and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of any changes. Across the school, leaders influence the direction and success of the curriculum and the quality of teaching in all classes effectively. All staff now understand the purpose and benefits of focussed self-evaluation and improvement planning and contribute meaningfully to the process.

Members of the governing body now have a better understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and take a more prominent role in setting strategic priorities. Many governors now visit the school to observe and talk to staff and pupils. This provides them with first-hand evidence that helps them to contribute meaningfully to discussions around the effectiveness of change and to challenge school leaders in relation to the school's work.