



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

A report on
Abergwili Voluntary Primary School

Gyfre Gardens
Abergwili
Carmarthen
SA31 2JD

Date of inspection: May 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

This inspection was undertaken as part of trying out our new inspection arrangements. As a result, this report may be slightly different in format to other published reports for providers in the sector.

About Abergwili Voluntary Controlled School

Name of provider	Abergwili Voluntary Controlled School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Religious character	Voluntary Controlled School
Number of pupils on roll	41
Pupils of statutory school age	31
Number in nursery classes	7
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 23.7%)</i>	8.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 13.2%)</i>	32.3%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	9.0%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2016
Start date of inspection	07/05/2024

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from 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

Summary

The executive headteacher is a skilful and insightful leader who sets high expectations for herself and her staff. A strong emphasis is placed on supporting pupils' well-being and ensuring that the school is a core part of its local community, including the church. A strong feature of the headteacher's work is the way in which she encourages staff from both of the schools under her leadership to work together and support each other to strengthen and improve provision.

Leaders use effective self-evaluation arrangements to highlight strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders and members of the governing body play an active part in the process, which supports their understanding of the school's priorities well. They promote a robust culture of safeguarding and manage the budget carefully to reduce the current deficit.

The caring, inclusive and familial nature of the school promotes good behaviour among pupils and encourages them to take care of, and respect, each other. Pupils show strong attitudes to learning, work together appropriately on practical tasks and develop their independent learning skills. Although pupils build increasingly on these skills, there are very few opportunities for older pupils to respond to teachers' feedback to improve their own work.

Teachers provide an interesting curriculum based on the local area. During their time at the school, many pupils make sound progress in their learning. Considering that most pupils are new to the Welsh language, many of the youngest pupils communicate with increasing confidence. Although most of the older pupils use the Welsh language appropriately, they do not always use polished spoken language regularly enough when communicating. Overall, many of the older pupils build appropriately on their secure early writing skills. However, teachers do not provide regular enough opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and write at length across the curriculum.

Over time, many pupils make suitable progress in their numeracy skills. However, there are very few opportunities for older pupils to develop the full range of skills and understanding in line with their ability and stage of development. There are also very few opportunities for them to practise and apply their skills in other areas of the curriculum. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is sound.

Recommendations

We have made 3 recommendations to help the school continue to improve

- R1 Strengthen pupils' Welsh language skills
- R2 Ensure that learning experiences challenge pupils regularly to support them to achieve to the best of their ability and in line with their stage of development

R3 Plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills purposefully over time

What happens next

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

Main findings

The executive headteacher sets a clear vision and strategic direction for the school, which are based firmly on developing well-rounded pupils from 'seed to flower', all of which is supported through consistent Christian principles. She is a skilful and insightful leader who sets high expectations for herself and the staff. A strong emphasis is placed on supporting pupils' well-being and ensuring that the school is a core part of its local community, including the church. Since being appointed, the headteacher has developed beneficial links between the leaders and staff of both of the schools under her leadership. This has a positive effect on provision and pupils' outcomes, in addition to developing staff's skills.

Leaders use a useful variety of self-evaluation arrangements to highlight strengths and areas for improvement well. Purposeful monitoring processes ensure that leaders, including members of the governing body, play an active part in evaluating the school's work. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the school's priorities, which focus well on improving teaching and learning, and challenge progress against the improvement targets appropriately. Leaders and staff promote a strong culture of safeguarding, which ensures that most pupils are happy and feel safe at school. Leaders monitor the budget carefully and work with the local education authority to try to reduce the deficit that has accumulated over the years.

The caring, inclusive and familial nature of the school promotes good behaviour among pupils and encourages them to care for, and respect, each other. As a result, nearly all pupils are polite towards each other, staff and visitors and support their peers very well. For example, the oldest pupils give careful consideration to the needs of the youngest pupils on the playground and ensure that they return to their class safely after break times.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are a clear strength across the school. When they are given an opportunity to do so, most pupils respond effectively to develop their independent learning skills and work with their peers on practical tasks, including working in pairs and groups. The foundation learning staff know pupils well and respond successfully to their needs, moving learning on to the next stage in line with their development. They have created a stimulating learning environment that encourages pupils to develop their independent learning skills and to experiment and discover for themselves very effectively. The good range of beneficial learning and play experiences sparks their imagination and builds effectively on their natural

curiosity. For example, they enjoy working together to design and build a ship by using large equipment while responding to a pirate's request for help.

Older pupils build on their independent learning skills fairly confidently and work successfully with their peers, including solving real-life problems, for example when designing and crating sluice gates as part of their work on the effect of floods on the village of Abergwili. Although older pupils are beginning to respond appropriately to teachers' feedback, there are very few opportunities for them to use this information purposefully to improve their own work.

Teachers provide a purposeful curriculum that is based firmly in the pupils' local area. As a result, they work closely with parents and members of the community to develop pupils' awareness of their *cynefin* and their heritage. A good example of this is the 'Brechfa Project', which provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to visit a local forest regularly to develop their awareness of nature, in addition to the history and geography of the area. They also create interesting pieces of artwork, such as pottery, which has a positive effect on their creative skills. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to influence what they would like to learn within their termly themes. This fosters interest and their positive attitudes towards their activities and encourages them to take ownership of their learning.

There is a productive working relationship between pupils and staff which is based on respect and trust. At the beginning of their time at the school, many pupils' skills are in line with what is expected for their stage of development, except in Welsh which is new to most of them. Over time, they make sound progress from their starting points. Teachers and teaching assistants use polished language to encourage pupils to use the Welsh language naturally in their learning. Most pupils listen well to adults and the contributions of their peers. As a result, many of the youngest pupils respond with increasing confidence when responding to instructions and questions by using a good range of vocabulary and syntax when offering ideas. Although most older pupils use the Welsh language appropriately, they do not always use polished spoken language and correct sentence patterns consistently enough when communicating. This, in turn, slows pupils' progress in developing their Welsh language skills to the best of their ability and in line with their stage of development.

Most foundation learning pupils develop positive attitudes towards reading and are familiar with the purpose and content of books. They develop their early learning skills well and many read confidently when reading aloud and when discussing the content of their books. Older pupils read an appropriate range of texts, show an interest in books and discuss the content maturely. Overall, they read fairly fluently and with good expression and intonation, particularly in English.

By engaging in a good range of purposeful learning experiences that are available to foundation learning pupils, most pupils' early writing skills develop strongly. The youngest pupils in the class practise and develop their fine motor skills effectively through a range of beneficial activities, including rolling dough to make fish shapes. By Year 1, the most able pupils write sentences confidently when creating 'Wanted' posters for pirates. Overall, many of the older pupils write with increasing confidence in a suitable range of different genres. They recognise the characteristics of different types of writing to plan their own pieces, for example when writing a newspaper report based on the eruption in Pompeii. However, teachers do not provide regular

enough opportunities to challenge pupils in their learning to support them to achieve to the best of their ability and stage of development. There are very few opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and write at length across the curriculum.

Over time, many pupils make suitable progress in their numeracy skills. The youngest pupils apply their understanding of number securely in a good range of beneficial experiences, including handling a range of coins when paying for goods. Fairly recently, many of the oldest pupils have used their numeracy skills suitably in other areas of the curriculum, including creating a line graph to record and analyse temperature. However, there are very few opportunities for pupils to develop the full range of skills and understanding in line with their ability and stage of development and to apply them in other areas of the curriculum.

Provision for pupils with ALN is sound. The additional learning needs co-ordinator and learning assistants work effectively with stakeholders, including parents, to support pupils through a range of support programmes. This has a positive effect on their learning and well-being.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are not a cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's funding appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

The school's arrangements for the safety of the site are not a cause for concern.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

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

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- 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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report refers to different quantities and proportions, e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).