



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

A report on

Romilly Community Primary School

**Romilly Road
Barry
CF62 6LF**

Date of inspection: June 2024

by

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

About Romilly Community Primary School

Name of provider	Romilly Community Primary School
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	717
Pupils of statutory school age	527
Number in nursery classes	101
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 23.7%)	15.0%
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 13.2%)	4.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.7%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2015
Start date of inspection	24/06/2024

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

Through exceptional leadership and the collective efforts of the school community, improvement at Romilly Primary School happens quickly. The focus on ensuring that pupils receive effective teaching and a curriculum that meets their needs means that most make strong progress in their learning. This includes pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), with English as an additional language (EAL) and those from low-income families. Particularly noteworthy is the rapid progress older pupils make in their writing, where they often produce excellent work.

Teaching develops pupils' knowledge and skills across the areas of learning and experience well. As a result, most pupils' progress in literacy and mathematics is strong and they frequently achieve high standards in their digital, creative and scientific work. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy, displaying good physical skills. They have the social and emotional skills to prepare them for adult life and appreciate the high levels of care and support that staff provide.

Most pupils love learning and experience high levels of well-being. From a very young age, they have well-developed independent skills, and their behaviour is exemplary. Remarkably impressive is how carefully they listen to feedback from staff and their classmates. They use this to improve their work and are often motivated to return to it to make it even better, when they have learnt new skills or techniques.

The professional relationship between leaders and governors is a significant strength. Together, they manage change very effectively, providing assured and purposeful leadership of the school. Decision-making is thoughtful, strategic and in the best interest of pupils and their families, despite the financial challenges the school faces. Leaders are sensitive in ensuring that cost is not an obstacle to pupils engaging in the full range of learning experiences the school offers. They recognise the complexity of the barriers to pupils attending school and ensure that families receive sensitive, tailored support. As a result, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals shows notable improvement.

The school's self-evaluation activities are robust. Leaders recognise, for example, the need to continue to improve pupils' listening and speaking skills in the Welsh language. Through high-quality professional learning for staff, they ensure that the school focuses its efforts on the aspects of its work that make the biggest difference to pupils' learning and well-being.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' Welsh listening and speaking skills
- R2 Continue to work with the local authority to address the school's financial challenges

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study for dissemination on its website in relation to how leaders have prioritised the development of high-quality teaching to support all pupils, including those affected by poverty, to learn and make strong progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

When starting school, a majority of pupils' communication and social skills are below those expected for their age. Due to effective provision in the nursery classes, most settle into school life quickly, and make rapid progress in their learning and ability to interact with others. Pupils build on their early successes well and, by the time they reach Year 6, they are mature, motivated and capable learners. Pupils from lower income families make strong progress from their starting points, as do those identified as having an additional learning need.

From an early age, most pupils develop an ability to listen successfully. As they move through the school, they listen attentively to adults and benefit from this, for example when receiving guidance on how to improve their work. Older pupils listen to each other particularly well. They respond to ideas from their peers and build on them effectively in discussion.

Staff provide stimulating role play areas for pupils in the foundation learning classes to explore their interests and curiosities, taking every opportunity to model language to them. As a result, most pupils, including those new to English, make rapid progress in learning new vocabulary and sentence structures. Older pupils continue this strong progress. By the time they reach Year 6, most have developed rich, expressive and technical language that they adapt to different situations. This significantly enhances their learning across the curriculum.

Most younger pupils are enthusiastic about learning Welsh. They understand basic questions well and their ability to speak and respond to spoken Welsh, considering their starting points, is developing appropriately. The progress older pupils make slows. Many lack confidence to speak Welsh and struggle to retain the vocabulary needed to extend sentences. The oldest pupils' use of different tenses is limited.

Most of the youngest pupils make strong progress in developing their early reading skills. They learn to recognise the sounds letters make quickly and begin to appreciate books. By Year 2, most read with good expression and understanding, articulating which genre of fiction they prefer to read. Most of the oldest pupils are sophisticated readers and use their skills very effectively to enhance their learning. For example, they identify authors' use of particular techniques, such as repetition,

hidden threat, rhetorical questions and pathetic fallacy. They talk about why they are effective, and then apply these techniques to create their own effective suspense stories.

Throughout the school, most pupils make consistently strong progress in developing their writing skills. As a result, writing acts as a powerful tool for pupils in supporting their learning across the curriculum. By the time they reach Year 6, they have a well-developed understanding of grammar, the techniques writers use to engage the reader, and how texts are structured. Punctuation and spelling are usually accurate. They understand the writing process and why revising and editing their work is important. This knowledge enables them to improve their drafts very effectively. In the older classes, boys in particular are motivated to write at length. They are proud of their achievements as writers.

Across the school, most pupils make good or better progress with their mathematical and numeracy skills. Younger pupils work confidently with number, measures and capacity through learning in practical situations. By Year 2, they have a strong understanding of the key foundations of mathematics, such as place value, and use a range of methods to add two- and three-digit numbers to calculate totals to money problems. A few stretch themselves, thinking about which method is the most efficient. Notably, pupils' progress accelerates in the older classes, where they become confident, competent mathematicians, who apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum proficiently.

Pupils' digital skills develop well. Most use these effectively and with increasing sophistication to support their work. For instance, younger pupils use software and film-making 'apps' adeptly to record and reflect on their achievements. Many older pupils use a range of digital tools, including email, word processing and spreadsheets competently and efficiently, to communicate and enhance their learning in different curriculum areas.

Across the school, pupils develop their creative and artistic skills very well, developing new ideas and experimenting with a broad range of media. By the time they leave the school, most are imaginative and skilled at expressing their artistic abilities, for example, when printmaking in the style of William Morris. Overall, pupils make excellent progress in developing their thinking and their ability to solve problems confidently. For example, younger pupils tackle challenges enthusiastically, such as how to build a bridge that will hold a kilogram weight, while older pupils find practical solutions to problems as part of the design process during technology sessions.

Pupils' physical development is also a significant strength. Most younger pupils develop dexterity very well through the creative, open-ended opportunities staff provide for them to develop their fine motor skills. For instance, Year 1 pupils make a bird's nest using clothes pegs as birds' beaks to collect material from the outdoors. Older pupils develop their physical skills, including stamina and technique, very successfully in a broad range of contexts, such as gymnastics, games and dance.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

As a result of its caring, inclusive atmosphere, nearly all pupils feel happy in school. Most are keen to attend, arriving promptly each morning, eager to start learning. Overall, pupil attendance has improved notably over the past three years. Gaps in attendance between groups of pupils, particularly those eligible for free school meals, have narrowed significantly during this time. Working relationships between pupils and staff are very strong and, as a result, nearly all pupils display highly positive attitudes towards school life. They feel safe and are confident that staff will help them if they need support.

Pupils' behaviour is a strength. Nearly all are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They are generous with their time and attention, treating their peers and adults with respect and kindness. Most are highly aware of the importance of inclusion and belonging. For example, at playtimes, the 'playground pals' chalk activities onto the yard, initiate games, and include any pupils who are playing alone.

Nearly all pupils feel valued as individuals and believe that they are treated fairly. They feel listened to and know that their views matter. Overall, pupils engage enthusiastically with the valuable range of opportunities leaders and staff provide for them to contribute their ideas to improve the school, including through pupil leadership groups. For example, the school council proposed the development of a new library and are now leading this project.

Pupils develop appropriately as ethical, informed citizens of the world. They value others and enjoy exploring issues relating to diversity and equality. They apply this knowledge to empathise with, and to demonstrate respect for, all members of the school community. Nearly all pupils understand the school's procedures for dealing with conflict and bullying, and have confidence that any incidents will be dealt with swiftly and resolved fairly.

Most pupils understand and talk knowledgably about the benefits of healthy eating. They are aware of the importance of keeping fit and many are active at playtimes. Pupils participate enthusiastically in sporting and creative extra-curricular activities including drama, gymnastics and football.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils have a strong, age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe online. For example, Year 2 pupils speak confidently about the importance of password security. By the time they reach Year 6, older pupils have a sophisticated understanding of the systems in place to keep them safe in digital spaces, speaking knowledgeably about firewalls and content filtering. Digital leaders play an active role in helping their peers use technology safely and proficiently.

Pupils have a clear understanding of classroom routines and adults' expectations of them. This familiarity and consistency of approach across the school has a positive impact on their well-being. As a result, nearly all pupils settle to their activities quickly, engaging calmly and purposefully with their learning. They are happy to work together, and do so successfully. Most show a high level of adaptability, moving fluidly and confidently between speaking, writing and creative tasks, while maintaining effort and focus.

Most pupils manage themselves and their workspaces efficiently, making highly effective use of available classroom resources to support independent learning. For example, pupils often use resources they have created themselves in previous lessons, such as tools to help them with their writing or mathematics work. As a result of pupils' highly developed sense of ownership of their learning, most take great pride in their work and are keen to share and demonstrate their achievements.

Nearly all pupils make highly effective use of teacher feedback to make progress in their learning. They are keen to improve and react positively to challenge. Furthermore, most pupils offer effective feedback to their peers based on a secure understanding of how to improve. They offer measured and accurate peer assessment with an effective balance of encouragement and suggestions for improvement. For example, when discussing their creative writing, older children evaluate their peers' use of techniques helpfully. They offer appropriate ideas for improvement, for example when considering the use of language features, such as metaphors, or varying sentence lengths to enhance their descriptions.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teaching and learning experiences across the school are strong. The school's curriculum vision emphasises the importance of effective teaching and learning, to develop pupils who are inspired to learn and seek high challenge. Provision meets their needs very well. In most instances, staff plan systematically for pupils to develop their numeracy and digital skills progressively through a range of effective cross-curricular contexts. The development of pupils' literacy skills is a significant strength.

Through well-considered planning, staff organise pupils' learning effectively within stimulating themes that engage and motivate them. They ensure that all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, receive broad and balanced learning opportunities across the areas of learning and experience. These reflect local, national and global contexts appropriately. For example, the school develops pupils' understanding of themselves as citizens of modern-day Wales well. They explore issues of cultural diversity and equality through learning about prominent Welsh sporting and educational figures, such as Betty Campbell. The school develops pupils' knowledge of Welsh history and heritage suitably through enrichment visits to local places of interest, such as the Barry War Museum.

Staff balance skilfully the need for pupils to develop core knowledge and skills, with purposeful opportunities for them to influence how and what they learn through an inquiry approach. For example, pupils follow their own interests and research answers to questions, such as what fashion was like during World War Two. They choose how they would like to present their learning, and this supports the development of their creative and independent skills successfully. A particular strength of the curriculum is how well the school draws on the expertise of its staff. Its provision for science, technology, the expressive arts and the development of pupils' physical skills is particularly strong. This enables staff to nurture the talents of individual pupils. Overall, however, staff lack confidence in speaking and teaching the Welsh language. As a result, pupils' Welsh oracy skills do not develop strongly enough as they move through the school.

Across the school, caring and skilled learning support assistants provide valuable support for pupils' well-being and learning needs. Most teachers challenge pupils effectively in nearly all aspects of the curriculum. They draw skilfully on a range of teaching approaches that have a strong impact on pupils' progress. In most instances, staff sequence learning well, and the pace is brisk. They promote pupils' thinking effectively through purposeful questioning, assess their progress carefully and resolve misconceptions as they arise. In most classes, teachers provide pupils with a range of well-judged resources and prompts to support them with their learning. However, in a few cases, they lead the learning too much and this results in pupils not always making as much progress as they could.

Overall, staff provide high-quality verbal feedback to pupils to encourage them to think more deeply and to prompt them to reflect on the quality of their work across curriculum areas. This helps pupils to make appropriate connections with their learning in other contexts and to consider carefully how they can improve. As a result of focused and timely feedback, pupils' standards of writing have improved significantly.

Despite the challenges of the school's buildings and grounds, staff have developed exciting learning environments that capture the imagination of pupils and promote learning very well. In the youngest classes, staff create authentic opportunities to develop pupils' early language and mathematical skills. For example, in the car wash role play area, nursery pupils take orders from customers and begin to learn about money. Staff observe them carefully, as they co-operate in pairs to provide a 'shampoo and rinse' service to clean a dirty scooter with brushes and sponges. This approach to observation helps staff plan future learning experiences and environments that meet pupils' developing needs well.

Adapting commercial reading schemes to cater for the individual needs of pupils, the school has developed a systematic approach to the development of pupils' early and advanced reading skills. The provision for the teaching of writing is highly effective and supports pupils to make strong progress. The school's work to engage and inspire boys as writers is particularly impressive. In most classes, provision for the development of pupils' numeracy and digital skills builds purposefully on their prior knowledge, and supports them to apply their skills well in a range of relevant contexts.

Care, support and guidance

Across the school, staff create a calm, safe and nurturing learning environment. Through a whole-school approach to well-being, staff develop strong professional relationships with pupils that support them to feel relaxed, confident and ready for learning. This helps most pupils to flourish.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN is a strength. Highly-skilled staff identify pupils' additional learning, social and emotional needs promptly. They liaise closely with pupils and their families to create individual learning plans that take full account of their views. The school chooses learning and well-being programmes for individuals and small groups carefully. Staff monitor the progress pupils make against their targets closely and use this knowledge to adapt and tailor provision, where needed, to better meet their needs. They use a broad range of strategies to evaluate

pupils' progress and identify purposeful next steps. In nearly all instances, pupils develop a range of strategies that they use successfully when in their classrooms. As a result, they usually take a full part in the learning experiences planned for them. A particular strength is how staff have developed the confidence of pupils with ALN to support one another in their learning.

The school supports families well. It involves outside agencies purposefully, for example, to provide advice to parents and help them access groups, such as 'Young Carers' and 'Play Therapy'. Also, skilled support staff offer workshops and resources to enable parents to support their child's learning at home. As a result, parents value their partnership with the school in meeting the needs of their children.

Provision for promoting pupils' social, moral and cultural development is effective. Staff are very good role models and have high expectations of how pupils behave and treat one another. The values of resilience, well-being, teamwork, perseverance, kindness and respect are at the heart of the life of the school. Staff provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to explore issues relating to these values. For example, pupils in Year 6 learn about how groups in society work to reduce inequalities relating to gender, race and disability. Although pupils use these valuable opportunities to reflect on their views and those of others, provision to support their spiritual development is less prominent.

Staff and leaders listen to the views of the pupils and support them to understand children's rights well. They provide pupils with frequent, worthwhile opportunities to behave as active young citizens in the life of the school. For example, pupils initiate changes to the dinner menu and the timing of lunch for different year groups, so that this can be a better social experience. Although membership of the pupil leadership groups is broad and representative of the school community, the proportion of pupils involved is relatively limited due, in part, to its large size.

Staff promote healthy eating and drinking effectively through the school's curriculum and by providing regular access to healthy snacks and water. It provides good opportunities, for example through a range of sports teams, for older pupils to take part in tournaments against local schools in cross country, football and athletics. This has inspired a few to join clubs outside of school to further develop their physical fitness.

Through the school's popular drama club, pupils in Years 2 to 6 have opportunities to participate in creative performances. They take responsibility for designing and making programmes and costumes, creating scenery and lighting effects. This promotes pupils' self-confidence, expressive capacities and the ability to work as a team very well. The school ensures that pupils from low-income families have opportunities to access all activities and experiences, and are not restricted through financial or any other constraints. In general, there are fewer extra-curricular opportunities for younger pupils.

The school places a high priority on the health, safety and well-being of pupils, parents, staff and visitors. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. The site is safe and secure, and staff are vigilant in monitoring this. The positive experiences pupils have of school are contributing strongly to an upward trend in pupil attendance. In addition, arrangements to monitor and promote good pupil attendance are effective.

The school works sensitively with pupils and their families, adopting a bespoke approach to supporting those where attendance is a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides bold, determined and inspirational leadership. She has high expectations of what pupils can achieve and has been successful in developing an ambitious, shared vision for the school. This vision focuses sharply on improving the quality of teaching and learning experiences to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their starting points, have the skills and knowledge to be successful in adult life. A clearly understood set of values guides and supports the behaviours, attitudes and aspirations of pupils and staff exceptionally well.

Members of the senior leadership team work together very well. Although they have clearly defined responsibilities, they have a comprehensive understanding of each other's role. This means that they work flexibly, drawing effectively on each other's complementary skills and expertise to ensure that staff, parents and pupils receive timely, high-quality support. When appropriate, they are comfortable to challenge each other to ensure they consider carefully the implications of the decisions they make. This helps to build staff confidence and trust in them as leaders.

Following a period of significant change and challenge, leaders have been successful in establishing a strong team ethos, where there is considerable professional respect. Leaders value highly the contribution every member of staff makes towards ensuring that the school is a happy and inclusive community for its pupils, with a strong safeguarding culture. Staff, at all levels, carry out their roles and responsibilities diligently and convey passion for their work. The headteacher has been particularly successful in making the most of staff curriculum expertise. This ensures that pupils progress well in their knowledge, understanding and skills across the areas of learning and experience, with older pupils often achieving high standards.

A notable strength of the school is its strong culture of self-improvement and reflection. Professional learning for staff is prioritised as an entitlement and innovation is encouraged. The programme of professional learning is carefully planned and highly effective in meeting whole-school, class and individual staff needs. Creating time and high-quality opportunities for all staff to collaborate, reflect on and improve their practice for the benefit of pupils has contributed strongly to the delivery of high standards of well-being and significant improvements to the quality of teaching. Arrangements for developing and reviewing staff performance, through the school's 'learn, grow, succeed' model, are supportive and robust. This approach has helped to develop a collective desire among the staff team to 'do even better'. Where necessary, issues of underperformance have been managed rigorously.

The school has successfully built leadership capacity at all levels. Through the use of regional partners and other professionals, the headteacher has provided valuable opportunities for the leadership team, governors and staff to deepen their understanding of the features of effective learning and teaching, and to sharpen their evaluative skills. Senior leaders support and empower middle leaders to influence and lead whole-school improvement priorities, such as improving pupils' writing, because they are the ones with the expertise to do so.

Leaders have a strong grasp of the school's strengths, and its areas for development, such as improving pupils' Welsh language skills. They welcome external challenge and review from partners to quality assure the school's findings, and to ensure that it does not become complacent or overlook any aspect of its work that requires development. Mindful of staff workload, leaders ensure that the school only adopts practices that add value to its work. They consider carefully how best to address national priorities, such as a Curriculum for Wales, prioritising those aspects that will have the greatest impact on the progress pupils make, such as the development of their literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Governors fulfil their roles exceptionally well. They are knowledgeable, fully-informed critical friends who are active in setting the strategic direction for the school. They have a wide range of professional experience that enables them to contribute strongly to the school's improvement journey. The governing body has undertaken a strategic review of its working practices, which has led to a restructuring of committees and more efficient use of formal meeting time. This enables governors to spend more time in school, working alongside staff and pupils. As a result, they have comprehensive, first-hand knowledge about the quality of teaching and learning, and the progress pupils make. Governors draw effectively on their professional networks to help them fulfil their statutory responsibilities, such as ensuring that there are strong arrangements to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking.

The school uses the pupil development grant effectively to accelerate the progress of pupils from low-income households. Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the impact of the allocation of the grant carefully to ensure that the school's provision meets pupils' needs. Its work to reduce the impact of poverty has had a particularly positive effect on pupil attendance and the development of their literacy skills.

Leaders, governors and the school's business manager have a thorough understanding of the school's financial circumstances. They prioritise the quality of pupils' educational experiences, and spending decisions align closely to the school's improvement priorities. They monitor this expenditure rigorously for its impact on pupils' progress and well-being. Currently, the school is in a very difficult financial situation where the deficit is large and forecast to increase. It is working with the local authority to agree a plan to address its financial challenges.

Leaders are knowledgeable about their school community and forge positive relationships with parents and carers. This helps them to identify pupil and family needs appropriately and they take a bespoke approach to the support they offer. There are numerous methods for communicating with parents about school life. Over time, these have become too complex and, on occasions, result in parents receiving conflicting information through different media platforms, or feeling overwhelmed with too many messages and alerts in multiple formats. Leaders have recognised this. They are working to simplify the school's systems and to improve the timeliness and accuracy of information for parents.

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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