



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

A report on

Goetre Primary School

**Rowan Way
Gurnos Estate
CF47 9PB**

Date of inspection: September 2022

by

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

About Goetre Primary School

Name of provider	Goetre Primary School
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	442
Pupils of statutory school age	342
Number in nursery classes	50
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 21.3%)	53.9%
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 [22.2%])	21.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	05/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	26/09/2022

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

Goetre Primary School provides pupils with a nurturing learning environment in which they feel safe and secure. Ensuring the well-being of pupils is a high priority for all members of the school community. As a result, pupils feel cared for and valued by staff. Most pupils behave well both in classrooms and when moving around the school.

Over the past year, the school has seen a period of major turbulence at senior leadership level with five different headteachers. This has had a significant impact on the school's ability to address important shortcomings in their provision. Leaders have started to make improvements, including increasing the provision for reading and information and communication technology (ICT). However, there are still shortcomings in the way that they identify and address other important weaknesses in the school's work.

In around half of classes, teaching does not ensure that pupils have the opportunity to make strong progress. As a result, pupils do not always achieve standards of which they are capable, particularly in literacy. In addition, staff do not always ensure that they provide pupils with stimulating and authentic learning experiences. They do not take into account the views of pupils about what they would like to learn well enough. In addition, pupils have too few opportunities to take on leadership roles at the school.

The provision to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), particularly those in mainstream classes, is generally effective. Staff identify pupils' needs at an early stage in their education and put suitable plans in place to help address the needs of individual pupils. The provision for pupils in the two learning resource bases has recently improved, but there are still inconsistencies in how well staff support pupils' learning.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the safeguarding and health and safety shortcomings identified during the inspection
- R2 Improve the quality of teaching and feedback so that pupils develop as independent learners and have the opportunity to achieve to the best of their ability
- R3 Improve standards of pupils' literacy and ICT
- R4 Further strengthen monitoring and evaluation to enable leaders to accurately identify and address important shortcomings in the school's work and to judge the impact of teaching and provision on improving pupils' outcomes
- R5 Further develop approaches to curriculum planning so staff have a shared understanding of progression, and all teachers consult with pupils to plan authentic learning experiences
- R6 Improve the quality of resources to support pupils' learning both indoors and outdoors

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 on a termly basis.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils start Goetre Primary School with communication and mathematical skills below those expected for their stage of development. During their time at the school, the majority of pupils make suitable progress from their starting points, including pupils eligible for free school meals. The majority of pupils with ALN, in mainstream classes and the learning resource bases, make good progress against their targets. However, a minority of pupils, particularly those who are more able, do not always make the progress of which they are capable.

Many younger pupils make appropriate progress in their oracy skills from their low starting points. They talk readily about the models they have made in the construction area and are happy to talk and share their experiences of birthday parties when planning a party for a familiar cartoon character. Many pupils in the older learning resource base talk enthusiastically about their learning. As they progress through the school, many pupils listen well and generally respond appropriately to questions. However, the majority of older pupils' responses lack confidence and a minority do not use a wide range of relevant vocabulary in their explanations.

Most younger pupils respond appropriately to a range of instructions given in Welsh and are beginning to reply using simple Welsh phrases and vocabulary. They enjoy singing and joining in with songs and number rhymes. As they progress through the school, most pupils do not improve their Welsh language skills well enough. Most older pupils cannot engage in simple conversations.

Most younger pupils, including those with ALN, make good use of their phonic knowledge to identify initial sounds. They use this well to support the decoding of simple words as they begin to read simple texts. They use a range of reading strategies suitably, such as picture clues, to support their understanding of unknown words. Older pupils engage well with reading material and are beginning to understand different genres, such as a playscript based on Chaucer's Tales. Although the majority of older pupils read with suitable fluency and understanding, they often lack the ability to use skills such as inference.

In the nursery and reception classes, many pupils are beginning to develop their fine motor skills appropriately to support their development of early writing skills. They use marks to represent letters and sounds in their emergent writing. In Years 1 and 2, many pupils make suitable attempts to spell simple words using their knowledge of letters and sounds. Most older pupils make suitable progress in understanding how to write for a range of genres. However, the progress of pupils' writing skills across the school is inconsistent. Many pupils do not make swift enough progress in improving their writing skills. Many older pupils have weak handwriting skills and do not present their work with sufficient care. They use punctuation inconsistently and the majority struggle to spell accurately and do not use a breadth of relevant vocabulary. A few more able pupils add mature language to add interest to their writing. Pupils use their literacy skills regularly in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 5 use writing skills to design a poster to advertise their rocket launch and

Year 6 pupils evaluate their musical instruments accurately as part of their science topic.

Most younger pupils successfully use tablet computers to play games and to access resources to enhance their learning of mathematical and reading skills. Older pupils use word processing programs confidently to write short stories, create fact files and information sheets. They use search engines correctly to find pictures and photographs to insert into their text and research facts on given subjects. For example, they create informative fact files about the Welsh dragon. However, overall, pupils do not improve their ICT skills well enough as they move through the school.

Most younger pupils make appropriate progress in their mathematical skill development. Many read, recognise and count numbers up to 10 accurately. Many more able younger pupils read and recognise two-digit numbers. As they move through the school, most pupils develop an appropriate understanding of place value and apply this knowledge in a range of problem solving activities accurately. However, overall a minority of pupils, particularly the more able, do not improve their mathematical skills well enough in individual lessons and over time. Pupils do not use their numeracy skills at the right level often or well enough to support their learning in other subjects.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are happy and feel safe and secure in school. Most pupils behave well in lessons and when moving around the school. They have respect for each other and adults. Nearly all pupils are confident that there are adults in school to speak to when any difficulties arise and are confident that staff will listen to them. They feel that staff look after them well. Most pupils have a strong awareness of how to stay safe, including when using the internet. Following periods of school closure due to the pandemic, most pupils who received pastoral support from the school's family liaison officer have responded positively to strategies to help them return to the classroom successfully.

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. Many pupils engage in daily physical activity enthusiastically. For example, Year 2 pupils enjoy a variety of activities each week as part of the school's initiative 'Get Goetre Going'. Pupils who attend after school sports' clubs provision enjoy training and playing matches against other schools.

Most pupils respond well to whole school events, such as anti-bullying weeks and nurture days. These events and days help highlight to pupils how to deal with tricky situations and teach them how to support each other.

Many pupils engage well with others when working in small groups or pairs. Most pupils demonstrate respect and care for each other, and pupils are mindful that pupils have differences. A majority of pupils sustain concentration for appropriate lengths of times when working in class. A majority of pupils do not use a wide range of strategies when having difficulty in their work and rely too heavily on support from adults. Across the school, pupils do not develop key leadership skills well enough as there are limited opportunities for them to take on positions of responsibility.

Although the school has worked successfully to begin to reduce the number of pupils with persistence absences, there are still too many pupils who do not attend school regularly. Most pupils arrive at school punctually at the start of the school day.

Teaching and learning experiences

Most staff have positive relationships with pupils and use a range of effective strategies to help raise pupils' self-esteem. They understand the challenges that pupils have faced over the past few years due to the pandemic and have helped to successfully reintegrate most pupils back into the classroom. The majority of teachers manage pupils' behaviour in lessons well. Many teaching assistants provide pupils with beneficial support, both within classrooms and in withdrawal groups.

In around half of classes where teaching is the most effective, teachers plan appropriate learning experiences that match most pupils' abilities. In these classes, teachers ensure that pupils engage well in their learning and make suitable progress. However, in around half of classes, teachers do not ensure that activities meet the needs of all pupils well enough. They do not have high enough expectations of pupils' achievement or how much pupils should accomplish in a lesson. As a result, a minority of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. A minority of teachers do not provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop as independent learners. In these classes, adults often over direct tasks, deliver whole class introductions that are too long and provide pupils with too much scaffolding. The majority of staff use appropriate questions to check pupils' understanding, but a minority miss opportunities to probe pupils' learning further with well targeted questions.

In the minority of classes where teachers provide useful feedback, pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their work. However, the majority of teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient guidance to help move their learning forward. Feedback is generally overly positive and does not always help pupils to know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Around half of teachers respond appropriately to pupils' learning during lessons and adapt teaching approaches accordingly. In these classes, teachers use an effective range of strategies to involve pupils in assessing their own learning.

The school has started to explore a range of approaches to planning and delivery of curriculum for Wales and has established a Goetre vision for the curriculum engaging all staff, parents and governors in this process. However, effective planning for the curriculum is at a very early stage of development. The school does not pay enough regard to the development of a well-understood and shared vision for teaching and learning. This leads to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning experiences provided and means that pupils do not make good enough progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Teachers plan exciting 'one off' learning activities as part of each termly theme or as part of themed weeks. For example there is a suitable range of trips and visitors to the school. Teachers make good use of the local park in Cyfarthfa and visits from local groups, such as an opera group. However, overall teachers do not plan sufficient day-to-day stimulating learning experiences. There are limited examples of activities that are authentic and based in real life contexts that pupils can relate to.

The school's provision for learning in the outdoors is underdeveloped. Whilst younger pupils use the outdoors regularly, there are limited resources to stimulate and motivate their learning. In addition, this hampers pupils' ability to develop creative and thinking skills and restricts their choices in what and how they learn. Teachers do not routinely plan opportunities for older pupils to learn in the outdoors.

The school has suitable provision in place for the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills in both English and Welsh and the majority of staff are good language role models for pupils in both languages. The school has recently enhanced provision for the teaching of reading through investment in a new reading scheme. This has improved pupils' access to stimulating reading resources for use both in school and at home. However whole school strategies to support the teaching of reading to enable all pupils to make strong progress are not always effective. Provision for the development of pupils' mathematical skills is suitable. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects at an appropriate level.

There is a suitable variety of opportunities for pupils to learn about the linguistic and cultural aspects of Wales. This includes annual Welsh weeks, the use of local artists for art projects and professionals from the community who support topic work. The school celebrates local famous people and people who have achieved well from the community. This helps to motivate pupils to have high aspirations about what they could achieve in life. There are limited opportunities for enriching the curriculum with learning activities to explore cultural diversity.

Care, support and guidance

School staff support pupils' emotional health and social needs well. The provision for pupils' physical and mental health and well-being is strong and is a key priority for the school. Staff are particularly mindful of the impact on pupils and their families of recent periods of school closure caused by the pandemic.

The school's planning approaches for pupils with ALN in mainstream classes is strong. There are effective processes in place for person centred planning involving key professionals and outside agencies where appropriate. Staff provide opportunities for pupils and their families to agree targets for improvement on pupils' Individual Development Plans. In addition, there is a well-planned and regular process to review these targets. Provision in the learning resource bases is less consistent. Younger pupils do not always have access to resources that support their individual needs well enough.

The school's additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) tracks the progress of pupils with ALN systematically. She monitors pupils' progress against their targets effectively. Through the hosting of ALN surgeries, the school offers staff useful opportunities to discuss strategies and interventions for ALN pupils and other pupils who are making limited progress. This is beginning to improve classroom provision to support these pupils.

The school has a wide range of beneficial links with outside agencies. These partnerships are effective and have a positive impact on securing additional support for pupils and their families. This includes a long-standing beneficial relationship with

local community support services including the local 'Early Help Hub' who provide family intervention for families within the locality using a referrals process. There are also strong links with other schools in the cluster to share good practice and the school takes a lead role in providing ALN support and guidance to other ALNCos across this group.

Staff identify the social and emotional needs of learners effectively through monitoring and assessment and plan a range of interventions to support these pupils, including emotional literacy support. These interventions have a positive effect on many pupils in receipt of this support.

The family liaison officer and educational welfare officer provide beneficial well-being support for pupils' and their families. This is valued by parents.

Over time, there have been very few opportunities for pupils to be a member of a pupil representation groups. Members of the school council have limited opportunities to influence the life and work of the school and have not been involved in any significant activity to allow them to make decisions. Very recently the school has broadened opportunities for a wider range of pupils to be involved in representation groups. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these groups.

Staff give pupils limited opportunities to express their views about teaching and the curriculum. Whilst in the majority of classes, staff often ask pupils to contribute to ideas for their topics, teachers direct most day-to-day learning activities and there are a very few opportunities for learners to influence how and what they learn.

The school does not currently track and monitor the contribution that pupils eligible for free school meals make to pupil leadership groups or their attendance at extra-curricular activities. It is therefore unclear how widely the school gives vulnerable pupils opportunities to contribute to the community and life of the school and decision-making processes.

The school has planned a curriculum to ensure pupils develop a suitable understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. This is particularly evident through the range of trips and visits undertaken. However, elements of this work are underdeveloped, in particular in relation to the significance of the locality in Welsh history.

Pupils participate in events such as annual Eisteddfodau in school and with the local cluster schools. These provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to participate in creative and artistic activities. Staff encourage pupils to participate in sporting activities and there is good attendance at after school cubs with a sporting focus, for example the football club. The school gives pupils beneficial opportunity to participate in competitive sporting events such as tournaments and matches against other schools.

Although over the past year there have been significant improvements in health and safety procedures at the school, arrangements to keep pupils safe do not meet requirements. A minority of staff do not have a clear enough understanding of the school's procedures for sharing concerns about pupils. In addition, the inspection team raised a site security issue with the school.

Most staff use the school's consistent approach in dealing with pupils' behaviour successfully. Staff deal swiftly with the rare instances of bullying.

The school has started to implement actions to successfully promote regular attendance and to reduce the large number of pupils with poor attendance. However, this work is at an early stage of implementation and is yet to have a significant impact on raising attendance levels overall. In addition, the school's procedures to follow up on any unknown absences are insecure.

Leadership and management

Over the past year, there has been significant instability in senior leadership at the school. In autumn 2021, the local authority issued the school with a warning notice to improve. Since September 2021, the school has had five headteachers. This has had a major impact on staff well-being. It has also hampered the school's ability to make improvements in many important areas, such as addressing the variance in the quality of teaching. This has had an impact on the progress that pupils in around half of classes are making. The school appointed the current headteacher in September 2022. He has had little time to have an impact on improving the school.

Leaders promote an ethos in the school where the well-being of staff and pupils is a high priority. They take the lead in effective strategies that ensure that most pupils feel happy and safe in school. Leaders set high expectations of pupil behaviour and communicate this to other staff. They lead by example in this respect and ensure that strategies for behaviour management result in a calm, orderly school environment.

Leaders recognise the shortcomings in their self-evaluation work and have included this as an area for development in this year's improvement plan. Leaders have not addressed shortcomings in the quality of teaching because their self-evaluation processes do not always identify key aspects that require improvement. They have rightly identified shortcomings in pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy and have included these in the current plan too. Leaders have recently written an action plan to improve the teaching of Welsh. However, staff have not fully implemented the plan and, as a result, there are shortcomings in the progress pupils make in improving their Welsh.

Leaders do not always monitor the impact of their spending on school improvement sufficiently to ensure that it has the desired effect. Leaders do not track the impact of grant spending on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils well enough to judge the impact of their actions.

Leaders have made improvements in a few important aspects of the school's work. For example, they have led improvements in restructuring reading provision throughout the school by purchasing new books and have started to improve the teaching of reading. The deputy headteacher has led work to improve aspects of health and safety procedures throughout the school successfully. Recently, leaders have reintroduced performance management arrangements for teachers, but these have not been in place long enough to have had an impact on improving teaching and learning.

Leaders have established effective teams to improve aspects of provision. The team that manage the provision for pupils with ALN is a particularly good example. They focus very effectively on the specific needs of each pupil, involving individuals purposefully when agreeing their individual plans.

Governors keep a close eye on the progress that the school is making against the improvement plan priorities using the clear and helpful headteacher's reports. Governors are beginning to challenge senior leaders appropriately in their role as a 'critical friend'. Recent additions to the governing body have strengthened their capacity in this respect. Despite having a useful range of expertise, governors do not play a significant part in the school's self-evaluation processes as they do not routinely gather first-hand evidence. They take appropriate account of the impact of poverty on pupils at the school. For example, they have challenged leaders over the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Whilst leaders understand the importance of creating a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school, there are important shortcomings in the current arrangements.

The senior leadership team have started to develop a positive ethos where staff are open to new ideas and better ways of securing pupil progress and wellbeing. For example, staff in the learning resource bases have worked closely with a local special school to receive valuable training. This is beginning to have a positive impact on provision for these vulnerable pupils. It also illustrates the way the school makes the most of beneficial links with other local schools.

The school is inclusive in its professional development opportunities for staff. Teaching assistants feel well supported in this regard. For example, five teaching assistants and the Family Liaison Officer have all received training on how to deliver a programme to develop pupils' emotional intelligence, which has a positive impact on pupil wellbeing.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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' wellbeing, 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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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