



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

**A report on**

**Greenhill Primary School  
Penywrldod  
Gelligaer  
Hengoed  
CF82 8EU**

**Date of inspection: February 2018**

**by**

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

## About Greenhill Primary School

Greenhill Primary School is in the village of Gelligaer in Caerphilly local authority. There are currently 186 pupils on roll aged 3 to 11, including 31 who attend the nursery part-time. There are five mixed-age mainstream classes and two special educational needs resource base classes.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is around 50%. This is significantly above the national average of 19%. The school identifies nearly 38% of pupils as having additional learning needs, including 21 pupils who have statements of special educational needs. This is well above the national average of 21%. Around a half of pupils with additional learning needs attend the school from outside its immediate catchment area. Nearly all pupils come from a white ethnic background and all speak English as a first language. No pupils come from Welsh speaking homes.

The last inspection was in June 2013. The headteacher took up her post in September 2014.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.  
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

## Summary

The school is a happy, caring community where members of staff have a deep understanding of individual pupils' personal and academic needs. Teachers and support staff place a strong focus on developing pupils' understanding and use of language, with the result that most pupils gradually gain confidence in speaking and using a wider vocabulary. Most pupils make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills as they move through the school, including those with additional or specific learning needs.

Teachers provide a clear structure for pupils' learning experiences. They plan interesting topics and worthwhile opportunities for pupils to use their skills in real life contexts. The overall quality of teaching is good. The provision for pupils with additional learning needs is comprehensive and successful.

The headteacher is a good professional role model and leads a united team of teachers and support staff who are dedicated to pupils' wellbeing and progress. Staff have a good understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and their role in helping to achieve them. The school environment provides a superb setting for pupils to learn and play both indoors and outside.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Raise the standards achieved by more able pupils
- R2 Increase pupils' confidence in speaking Welsh
- R3 Provide more opportunities for pupils to work independently
- R4 Improve attendance and punctuality

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

Many pupils begin school with skills that are below the level expected for their age, but they make good progress and achieve expected levels by the end of key stage 2. Most pupils with additional learning needs, including those in the special needs resource base, make good progress from their starting points. However, pupils of higher ability do not always achieve as much as they could.

Most pupils listen attentively in class and in whole school assemblies. Nearly all enjoy listening to stories and this helps them expand their own vocabulary. For example, pupils in the nursery discuss mixing porridge during role-play activities in the 'three bears' cottage'. Most pupils listen, understand and respond appropriately to instructions in Welsh.

On entry to school, a few pupils have speech and language difficulties and many others lack confidence in speaking. However, most pupils speak with increasing confidence and gradually use a wider vocabulary as they move through the school. For instance, pupils in Years 2 and 3 use the word 'apprehensive' to describe Rapunzel's feelings as she plans her escape. During key stage 2, most pupils use subject-specific vocabulary accurately. For example, most older pupils use the terms 'rhetorical question' and 'ellipsis' when discussing their work in English. Many pupils in the special needs resource base use a range of communication aids, such as visual picture exchange vocabulary, effectively to initiate conversations. The majority of pupils use Welsh during routine activities, such as taking the register, but most do not speak Welsh confidently in informal situations.

Pupils read a good range of fiction and non-fiction. In the foundation phase, most pupils develop a sound understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds and use their knowledge well to help them read and spell. In key stage 2, most pupils enjoy reading, answering questions about different texts and justifying their responses. A pupil in Year 4, for example, described his pleasure in reading a Welsh story, 'The Changeling', because 'there's a lot of 'suspense in it, which makes you want to read on'. Confident readers in key stage 2 skim and scan texts effectively to retrieve specific information. However, less confident readers find it difficult to use the contents and index pages to read efficiently. Most pupils in the special needs resource base make good progress in their literacy skills.

Pupils write for many different purposes across the curriculum, sometimes at considerable length. The youngest pupils make rapid progress from mark making to forming recognisable letters, words and writing simple sentences. By Year 2, most pupils are aware of different forms of writing, such as stories and notes in preparation for a discussion. More able pupils write clear stage directions in the play scripts they write, such as 'exit BBW' (Big Bad Wolf). During key stage 2, pupils increase the range of their writing. For example, younger pupils write newspaper reports about the Spanish armada and older pupils create brochures about countries they are studying. Most pupils take pride in presenting their work neatly. However, the majority do not use a wide enough variety of vocabulary and sentence structure in their writing.

Most pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics and apply their numeracy skills well in real life contexts. For example, in the foundation phase, most pupils find lines of symmetry correctly to complete symmetrical pictures and handle money confidently when buying and selling items in the class shop. In key stage 2, most pupils use their skills well to record data about how temperature affects the rate at which sugar dissolves. Most pupils in the special needs resource base have a good understanding of basic money and can measure lengths up to 50 centimetres. However, most pupils do not engage in enough independent problem-solving activities.

Nearly all pupils use a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment such as laptops and tablets confidently in their work across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 3 use the internet to research and find photographs for their project on castles. Older pupils use spreadsheets extensively to record and analyse their findings in a project about birds. They are also developing useful coding skills, for example, to move a robot around a screen.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic about coming to school, enjoy learning and work hard. In lessons, most pupils apply themselves immediately, engage fully in set tasks and complete their work. They persevere and concentrate for extended periods. Most pupils in the special needs resource base are eager to engage in their activities and focus on their tasks for a good amount of time. Many pupils participate in popular extra-curricular clubs including ICT, music and art.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour when moving around the school, during break times, morning assemblies and lessons is good. They are very polite when greeting each other, welcome visitors and treat adults with respect. Most pupils in the special educational needs resource base relate well to one another and respond appropriately to instructions and requests from staff.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and know who to approach if they have any concerns. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Most pupils understand the importance of making sensible choices about healthy lifestyles. Pupils discuss the contents of their packed lunches and the healthy eating choices they make. The eco committee also gives helpful advice about what constitutes a healthy lunchbox.

Most pupils work and play together harmoniously and help each other voluntarily. The youngest pupils co-operate well during role-play activities and when building shelters with wooden blocks. Older pupils listen attentively to the views of others and wait patiently for their turn, for example, when explaining their number challenge answers. Most pupils develop as enthusiastic learners and respond positively to the caring and supportive climate that is an integral part of the school.

Many pupils are developing leadership skills through responsibilities such as digital leaders and eco committee members. The school council discusses issues such as how to keep the physical education cupboard tidy and the contents of the fruit trolley.

Overall, however, their role in seeking and representing the views of all pupils and making an impact on school improvements is underdeveloped.

Nearly all pupils are extremely proud of their new school and show care and respect for their environment. They have a sound understanding of the school's values. For example, their 'Be a Good Friend' display reflects their consideration for other people's needs. Pupils also care for the local neighbourhood through activities such as helping to clear litter in the village.

Most pupils arrive on time for school, but a few are often late. There have been recent improvements in attendance rates, but these remain in the lower 50% when compared with similar schools.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

Teachers provide a clear structure to the school day, which builds pupils' knowledge and skills systematically and meets their needs well. Teachers give pupils regular, beneficial practice in basic skills such as spelling, handwriting and learning times tables. They then provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in real life contexts through a range of interesting topics. For example, pupils in the reception class write shopping lists to buy the ingredients for pizza and pancake recipes. Pupils in lower key stage 2 apply the methods they have learned in mathematics lessons to calculate how long each monarch reigned during the Tudor era.

Enjoyable educational visits to places such as the theatre, Henllys castle and Llancaich Fawr boost pupils' interest and understanding of the topics they study. A trip to Birmingham to participate in the 'Young Voices' singing event had a positive impact on pupils' appreciation of cultural diversity and the wider world. Pupils in the special needs resource base enjoy participating in such visits and activities when suitable.

Pupils have a few opportunities to contribute their own ideas to topics they study. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 3 suggest making 'Wanted' posters for the witch in the Rapunzel story and pupils in key stage 2 sometimes conduct research on the internet into aspects of topics that particularly interest them. Overall, however, pupils have too few opportunities to lead their own learning and work independently.

Recent improvements in the provision of homework reinforce the basic skills pupils learn during the day. Homework tasks have a clear structure so that parents and pupils know what teachers expect. There are also worthwhile opportunities for older pupils to conduct research online at home. These clear arrangements have led to a notable increase in the number of pupils completing homework tasks.

The school promotes pupils' awareness of Welsh culture through experiences such as preparations for Saint David's Day and their study of the Welsh legend of Devil's Bridge. There are many bilingual notices around the school and teachers give instructions and write comments in pupils' books in Welsh. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence in speaking Welsh in informal situations.

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. There is a calm atmosphere in every classroom and working relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils like and respect their teachers and respond well to their positive expectations of them.

Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach and deploy learning support assistants effectively to help pupils with their work. There is a good balance in most lessons between whole class, group and individual work. Generally, teachers adapt activities effectively to meet the needs of pupils, but do not always offer a high enough degree of challenge for more able learners. Staff provide helpful oral feedback to pupils as they work and generally use the 'two stars and a wish' system of marking pupils' work effectively.

Teachers and support staff are good language role models. This is a particularly strong feature in the overall quality of teaching. Staff enrich pupils' understanding and vocabulary through their own use of language and through the literature they introduce to pupils. For example, teachers and support staff in the foundation phase model how pupils might talk and work in role-play areas, such as the three bears' cottage. In key stage 2, teachers often emphasise correct subject-specific terminology, such as 'variable' in science lessons, to extend pupils' understanding and the range of vocabulary they use.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school is a safe and happy community that nurtures pupils' personal and social skills very well. A strong inclusive, caring and mutually supportive ethos promotes pupils' wellbeing effectively. Teachers and support staff know pupils well and respond to their emotional and physical needs with understanding and sensitivity. The school building and grounds are safe and secure. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school encourages pupils to appreciate and respect one another's different talents and abilities successfully. Assemblies, sensitive behaviour management and the school's positive values contribute strongly to pupils' moral and social development. For example, the school's encouragement for pupils to use 'kind hands and kind feet' supports its anti-bullying strategies and the importance of friendship very well. Pupils who need extra help with their social and emotional development attend support groups where carefully planned sessions help equip them with the skills they need to engage positively with others.

There are appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. The school promotes the benefits of a healthy lifestyle effectively. For example, it communicates clear advice for parents about the contents of their children's lunchboxes. There are regular physical education lessons and a few opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular sporting activities.

Arrangements for identifying pupils with additional learning needs are rigorous. Staff use a wide range of assessment information effectively to plan high quality support for pupils who need extra help with their learning. The additional learning needs co-ordinator has close links with many outside agencies to provide further specialised support for pupils with specific needs.



Support staff work skilfully to deliver a wide range of highly effective intervention programmes that meet the needs of individuals and specific groups successfully. For example, pupils who are acquiring speech and language skills make very good progress in these support sessions.

Members of staff in the special needs resource base carry out a wide range of assessment procedures that identify pupils' needs accurately. They produce detailed, specific targets that focus clearly on each pupil's individual learning and wellbeing needs. As a result, pupils receive support that matches their identified needs and abilities well. Staff manage pupils' transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3 effectively so that they settle happily in their new school.

The school develops productive relationships with parents and provides valuable opportunities for them to learn how to support their children. For example, regular training sessions for parents develop their understanding of how to ensure their children's safety online and explain the school's new initiatives in teaching reading. The use of the school's own 'app' provides an effective means of communication with parents so that they are up-to-date with news and events. The family engagement officer performs a vital role, forging links between home and school in a family-friendly way. She works closely with individual families in areas such as improving attendance and providing additional support to help secure pupils' emotional and personal wellbeing. For example, she helps them learn how to manage their children's behaviour positively.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

The headteacher is a good professional role model and leads a united team of teachers and support staff who are dedicated to pupils' wellbeing and progress. Staff have a shared understanding of the school's values, which they communicate consistently and effectively to pupils and the wider school community.

The senior leadership team supports the headteacher effectively to address priorities, such as improving pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. For example, leaders ensure that teachers implement agreed priorities, such as the provision of stimulating introductions to class topics, effectively.

Staff work well as a team and share their knowledge and expertise productively with one another. For instance, teaching assistants who have received training in specialist programmes to develop pupils' speech and language skills share their expertise with teachers to help them plan effectively to meet individual pupils' needs. Valuable opportunities for teachers to observe and discuss each other's lessons help ensure consistency in the quality of teaching.

Teachers have developed productive partnerships with staff in neighbouring schools to develop their own practice and share their expertise. For example, the deputy head teacher has provided training for the local cluster of schools in developing pupils' ICT skills. Year 6 pupils work with teachers in the high school during the summer term, which has a positive impact on their ICT skills and prepares them well for the next stage in their education. Other worthwhile initiatives include the school's project with three other primary schools to develop 'philosophy for children'. This is helping to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills, and their understanding of

their own learning. Close professional links with a local special school help staff in the special needs resource base to extend their skills in working with pupils with specific needs.

The school uses a wide range of first-hand evidence to evaluate its standards and provision and identify areas for improvement accurately. For instance, the school's actions in response to a survey of pupils' attitudes and wellbeing have improved most pupils' self-esteem. 'Learning walks', and the monitoring of pupils' work, also give leaders useful information about the school's strengths and areas for development. All members of staff take part in the school's self-evaluation processes. As a result, they understand the school's priorities and play their part in helping to achieve them.

The school development plan includes relevant targets for improvement taken directly from analysis of a range of information on pupils' performance. Clear agreed actions, linked to appropriate timescales, ensure that members of staff know what leaders expect of them.

Governors understand their roles clearly. Through detailed reports from the headteacher and other staff, 'learning walks' and the analysis of a range of data, governors have a sound understanding of pupils' attainment compared with pupils in similar schools. They challenge in a supportive and constructive manner to move the school forward in many areas, although their level of challenge with regard to pupils' standards is not always rigorous enough.

School resources are plentiful. There is a very well stocked library and enough ICT equipment for every pupil. The purpose-built school environment provides a superb setting for pupils to learn and play indoors and outside. The building and grounds are in an excellent state of decoration and repair. Classrooms are light, airy and spacious and staff organise resources and equipment effectively to support pupils' learning.

The school monitors and manages its budget carefully to ensure that expenditure links well with its improvement priorities. For example, the school deploys the skills of support staff efficiently and uses the pupil development grant prudently to raise the standards of pupils who have expressive and receptive language difficulties. As a result, most pupils' confidence, skills and understanding are improving.

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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