



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

A report on

**Llanfabon Infants School
Bryncelyn Avenue
Nelson
Treharris
CF46 6HL**

Date of inspection: November 2017

by

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

About Llanfabon Infants School

Llanfabon Infants School is in the small town of Nelson in the Rhymney Valley. It caters for pupils between the ages of three to seven. Virtually all the pupils come from the immediate surrounding area. Around 25% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average of 19%.

There are currently 144 pupils on roll including 40 in the two nursery classes. There are five classes, including two mixed age classes, taught by five full-time teachers.

The school identifies that around 23% of pupils have additional learning needs including a very few pupils with statements of special educational needs. This is close to the national average of 21%. No pupils speak Welsh at home and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The local authority looks after a very few pupils. The school excluded a very few pupils in the last year.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2016. The school's last inspection was in April 2013.

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

Overall, pupils' progress at Llanfabon Infants School is inconsistent. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the school. Teachers structure pupils' work carefully and as a result, most pupils make good progress from their starting points with developing these skills. However, more able pupils do not progress as well as they could and too many pupils do not behave well enough in class. In addition, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills independently indoors and outside. Teachers assess and record individual pupils' progress carefully, but whole school systems for tracking pupils' progress over time, to ensure that the school meets their needs effectively, are at an early stage of development.

Since her recent appointment, the new headteacher has focused appropriately on pupils' standards and their attitudes to learning. However, overall, communication with staff and parents has not been effective enough. This means that the school community does not have a strong and shared vision to enable it to move forward. School improvement processes are not sharp enough and as a result, progress in addressing important areas for development in the school has been too slow.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Adequate and needs improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Adequate and needs improvement
Leadership and management	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Improve communication with staff and stakeholders
- R2 Develop pupils as independent learners
- R3 Improve self-evaluation and strategic planning, including a more effective approach to professional learning
- R4 Ensure that all pupils, particularly the more able, make good progress in their learning
- R5 Ensure staff have clear roles and responsibilities
- R6 Improve attendance and punctuality
- R7 Address the safeguarding and wellbeing issues raised during the inspection

What happens next

Significant improvement

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils start school with skills at or below the average for their age and stage of development. During lessons, the rate of pupils' progress is inconsistent across the school. A few pupils lose interest quickly and do not develop their skills well enough. More able pupils do not progress as well as they could and those eligible for free school meals do not achieve as well as others overall. Most pupils receiving additional support for basic skills make appropriate progress from their varying starting points in developing their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Pupils with additional learning needs make progress that is more limited. Over time, most pupils make good progress from their starting points in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

Most pupils develop their speaking skills well. Most nursery and reception pupils talk about their activities with growing confidence. Many younger pupils listen to instructions carefully and follow these appropriately. Most older pupils talk confidently to each other and to adults. They volunteer answers to questions and give simple reasons as to why they are proud of particular pieces of work. When they have the opportunity, older pupils sustain dialogue and discuss issues well. Most pupils develop good reading skills by the time they reach Year 2. At the beginning of the foundation phase, pupils make appropriate progress as they begin to learn letters and sounds. In Year 2, many pupils read 'value' words correctly on labels, such as 'respect', 'happiness' and 'politeness' to add to their friendship potion. They enjoy reading books and talk enthusiastically about their favourites. Many older pupils write for different purposes effectively using the support provided for them. For example, they make good use of prompts on display to spell words correctly. More able pupils write longer pieces of work of good quality, such as when they re-tell a familiar fairy tale. They use simple punctuation accurately, spell common words correctly and use the support provided well to help them spell words that are more complicated. However, more able pupils do not develop their ability to write independently and at length well enough.

At the beginning of the foundation phase, most pupils are beginning to develop their counting skills appropriately. They develop their understanding of mathematical language suitably such as when they find long and short sticks in the forest school. As they move through the school, most develop a sound understanding of place value, and begin to apply this successfully such as when they order coins correctly according to their monetary value. By Year 2, many pupils use partitioning strategies successfully to halve two-digit numbers. They solve word problems using doubling and halving and they are beginning to carry out mental calculations appropriately during regular warm up sessions. With adult support, pupils use their mathematical skills across different areas of learning effectively, such as when they use their emerging understanding of standard measures to create junk models. However, in general, pupils, particularly those who are more able, do not develop and apply their mathematical skills well enough independently in different contexts.

Most pupils develop appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) skills. At the beginning of the foundation phase, many pupils use a programmable

toy and access applications on a computer tablet appropriately. However, a few pupils struggle to use applications successfully without support. By Year 2, pupils develop their word processing skills well. They open files on the computer independently and save and print their work successfully. However, pupils do not choose for themselves whether to present their work on paper or on the computer. They know how to use the computer to research topics and they use tablet devices confidently, for example to take photographs and to scan codes.

Across the school, many pupils develop a suitable understanding of simple Welsh words and phrases. They join in enthusiastically, for instance to sing a simple Welsh song in assembly or to use repeated phrases confidently during registration. They respond well to the 'Cryw Cymraeg's' enthusiastic efforts to encourage them to use the phrase of the week. However, in general, very few pupils use Welsh without prompting. By Year 2, many pupils are beginning to write simple structured sentences, including sentences using the past tense, for example about a visit to the jungle. However, they do not practise their Welsh writing independently to help them consolidate their understanding.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils are kind and caring towards one another. They have strong working relationships with staff and they are happy and well settled in school. In general, pupils behave well as they move around the building and are courteous to visitors and to other adults such as the canteen staff. Most pupils are curious and eager to learn. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about attending the after school clubs where they enjoy taking part in the craft and sports activities. A very few pupils with challenging behaviour struggle to play a full part in school life as they do not engage well in the activities provided. In addition, a minority of other pupils do not behave well enough in lessons, as they are not active enough to explore, experiment and lead their own learning. This restricts their ability to sustain concentration and their perseverance to complete tasks.

By Year 2, nearly all children understand that it is important to eat well and take regular exercise to be healthy. They play enthusiastically with equipment such as balls and skipping ropes on the yard at playtimes and enjoy eating fruit for snack and their dinners at lunchtime. Across the school, pupils are developing a beneficial awareness of fairness and the importance of treating others with respect, such as through their recent anti-bullying focus. By taking on simple responsibilities, for example as 'helpwr heddiw' and taking part in assembly, many pupils are beginning to develop their confidence and resilience.

Pupils' attendance remains too far below that of pupils in similar schools, and the school's attendance figures from last year show no improvement since the previous inspection. Too many pupils arrive after the start of morning school, which slows the pace of learning at the beginning of the day. Pupils and parents are beginning to respond to the school's recent initiatives to improve attendance.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Teaching is adequate and needs improvement. Across the school, there are few opportunities for pupils to use their skills independently and creatively. Pupils are

unable to make choices about what and how they learn or to practise and consolidate their learning by exploring and experimenting freely. Over-reliance on support from teachers and teaching assistants and worksheets limits pupils' opportunities to develop resilience and learn to persevere effectively. However, although the learning is too adult directed, teachers place an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy and ICT skills. They plan and structure pupils' work carefully helping them develop a sound understanding of concepts and skills. They provide structured opportunities for pupils to learn to apply their skills in different contexts.

Most teachers use suitable strategies to gain pupils' attention and support their learning. For example, they use songs to encourage pupils to come and sit in the circle and they provide useful opportunities for them to discuss ideas in pairs. However, they do not use a wide enough range of approaches to sustain pupils' interest and to challenge all groups of pupils to achieve their potential. Most teachers manage behaviour consistently and positively, praising pupils appropriately and reminding them to be respectful of one another. As a result, most pupils behave well as they move around the school. However, the pace of lessons and the time spent sitting on the carpet means that a minority of pupils, particularly boys, become restless and distracted and disturb the learning of others.

Most teachers use questioning techniques appropriately to gauge pupils' understanding. However, questioning to draw out and further develop pupils' responses is less well developed. Teachers plan clear learning objectives, provide constructive feedback and involve pupils in useful discussions to help them begin to evaluate their own work appropriately. For example, in the forest school, pupils evaluate whether the musical instruments they make produce an appropriate sound. Support staff play an important part in leading pupils' learning. However, they do not always receive clear enough guidance about how they should be supporting individuals and groups of pupils.

Teachers plan interesting topics on a three-year cycle such as 'To Infinity and Beyond!' These appeal to pupils and provide suitable coverage of all areas of the foundation phase curriculum. Teachers are beginning to involve pupils by asking what they know already about topics and what they would like to know. However, this is in its early stages of development and in general, planning is not yet flexible enough to follow pupils' interests or to build consistently on what they already know. There are insufficient opportunities to enrich pupils' learning through visits to places of interest in the local community and learning from visitors.

There is a strong Welsh ethos in the school. Staff have a positive attitude to using the Welsh language, which promotes pupils' confidence and enthusiasm for using Welsh. The school develops pupils' understanding of the culture and history of Wales suitably. For example, pupils explore the character of Mary Jones through role-play as well as learning about Welsh writers such as Roald Dahl.

The quality of the indoor learning environment and the resources provided for pupils is inconsistent across the school. The school has recently invested in its outdoor learning environment and has begun to establish a forest school programme. However, planning for purposeful, independent and challenging learning in the outdoors is still limited.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

Staff create a warm and supportive environment in the school. They teach pupils about healthy life style choices well and ensure that they have a good awareness of healthy eating.

The curriculum provides suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures and faiths. For example, during multicultural week pupils produce fact files about different countries, create artefacts and taste food from around the world. Through helpful topic work and assemblies, staff support pupils to reflect on how to be kind and understanding, and to develop a suitable awareness of issues around bullying. The school fosters shared values such as friendship, honesty and fairness well, and encourages older pupils to reflect on these in their written work. However, the school does not ensure that all pupils attend assembly and so it does not comply fully with daily act of collective worship requirements.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to begin to learn about becoming active citizens through responsibilities, such as school ambassadors, eco councillors and 'Criw Cymraeg'. There are useful opportunities for Year 2 pupils to begin to follow their interests by participating in after-school sports and craft clubs. The school helps foster pupils' self-confidence suitably through occasional activities such as taking part in assemblies.

Staff communicate appropriately with parents. They have begun to share helpful information recently about pupils' attendance at parents' evenings and to use social media to share examples of pupils' learning effectively. Teachers provide interesting workshops, including the 'Harvest Gathering' workshop, to help parents understand what and how their children learn at school.

Leaders have established a new system recently to track pupils' progress. They use this appropriately to establish pupils' starting points, set targets for improvement and monitor progress within year groups. However, leaders do not draw the information together at a whole school level. They do not analyse tracking information strategically to identify the best way forward for all pupils or to assess the impact of extra support on pupils' progress. Through new bi-monthly pupil progress meetings, leaders identify pupils in need of additional support. However, class teachers are not involved in these meetings and this limits their effectiveness. The school provides suitable extra help for groups and individuals. Staff providing additional support track pupils' individual progress competently. However, although staff plan programmes of work for pupils who have additional learning needs, in general, they do not consider pupils' individual learning needs well enough when they plan activities. This limits the progress that pupils with additional learning needs make.

The school works purposefully with additional agencies, for example, the educational psychology service, and specialist teaching teams. Recently, this has included accessing joint training for staff and parents to improve provision for pupils with specific learning needs. The school is currently developing additional provision through a nurture group to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable pupils, but it is too early to see the impact of this.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding do not meet requirements in all respects and give cause for concern. During the inspection, the team made governors aware of these concerns.

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Since her appointment, the headteacher has focused appropriately on securing improved standards of learning for pupils. She has improved pupils' motivation suitably by showcasing their achievements and celebrating positive attitudes to learning through a purposeful whole-school approach. However, the lack of effective communication overall with staff and parents, means that the school community does not have a shared vision to drive improvement forward successfully.

Leaders do not work together strategically to plan to improve pupils' outcomes or to communicate decisions and actions clearly, consistently and in reasonable time to all staff. For example, records of meetings are not precise enough to enable the tracking of agreed actions. Most staff do not have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, or know what the headteacher expects of them. These important shortcomings in leadership have a negative impact on staff morale and slow the pace of improvement.

Most staff benefit from suitable professional learning opportunities, linked to their performance objectives. This has helped improve pupils' speaking skills and the consistency and quality of staff feedback to pupils. The headteacher has forged a worthwhile collaborative partnership to support staff to develop their professional knowledge and skills through observing effective practice in other schools. However, leaders have not developed a coherent whole-school approach to professional learning. This means that activities do not always align closely enough to the areas most in need of improvement and their impact is unknown. Leaders do not ensure appropriate support for staff following their initial training.

The governing body understands and oversees matters affecting the day-to-day management of the school well. For example, the chair of governors and vice chair meet the headteacher regularly to support her with issues of pupil and staff wellbeing. However, governors are not involved in setting the strategic direction for the school. They do not hold leaders to account robustly enough for improving aspects of the school's work, for example pupils' attendance. Their contribution to school self-evaluation is at an early stage of development.

In general, leaders self-evaluate from a suitable range of monitoring activities. However, leaders' overly positive assessments mean that the self-evaluation report is not accurate and does not identify appropriate priorities for improvement. It presents an over generous picture of many aspects of provision and leadership. Where it does identify weaknesses, leaders do not always transfer these into priorities for improvement in the school improvement plan, for instance to develop pupils' independent learning skills. The school's plans lack clear milestones to secure the timely implementation of actions and do not provide details of the individuals or teams with overall responsibility for each priority. As a result, leaders are not able to hold staff to account for the plan's progress.

The school has not addressed two of the three recommendations from the last inspection with regard to attendance and pupils' lack of independent learning skills. These remain urgent areas for improvement.

Leaders and governors manage the school's delegated budget competently over time. The school uses its pupil development grant appropriately to support vulnerable pupils who are less able or who have additional learning needs. However, leaders and governors do not focus well enough on improving the outcomes of eligible pupils who are more able.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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

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

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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