



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

**A report on**

**Plasnewydd Primary School  
Castle Street  
Maesteg  
CF34 9UN**

**Date of inspection: January 2018**

**by**

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

## About Plasnewydd Primary School

Plasnewydd Primary School is in Maesteg, in Bridgend local authority. There are around 280 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11, including 25 full-time nursery children and nine who attend part-time. There is a relatively high level of pupil transience, with 20% of pupils joining the school after the nursery year. There are three single-age and six mixed-age classes.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is 31%. This is well above the national average of 19%. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity and speak English at home. The school identifies that around 33% of pupils have additional learning needs. This is above the national average of 21%.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2016. The school's previous inspection was in June 2011.

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 caring community that gives high priority to promoting pupils' wellbeing. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe and happy. They behave very well and have positive attitudes towards their learning. Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress towards their individual targets in withdrawal group sessions.

In key stage 2, many pupils do not make suitable progress in building their basic skills, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils throughout the school lack the ability to apply their writing and numeracy skills well enough in work across the curriculum. Too many teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and the curriculum is insufficiently broad and balanced. This limits pupil progress.

Since her appointment, the headteacher has introduced a few successful initiatives that focus on aspects of pupils' wellbeing and she has improved communications between home and school. However, the work of the senior leadership team lacks focus, and procedures for identifying weaknesses and bringing about improvements in teaching and learning are not robust enough. This means that progress in addressing important areas for improvement is too slow.

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

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in key stage 2
- R2 Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2
- R3 Revise the curriculum so that it is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all pupils
- R4 Challenge more able pupils
- R5 Strengthen the effectiveness of senior leaders in identifying and addressing shortcomings in standards and provision
- R6 Address the safeguarding issues identified during the inspection

## **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, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

## Main findings

### **Standards: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**

On entry to the school, most pupils have levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are below those expected of pupils of a similar age. During their time at school, pupils' progress is inconsistent. Many make good progress during the foundation phase but, in key stage 2, many pupils do not develop their basic skills well enough and more able pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Many pupils with additional learning needs make suitable progress towards their individual targets in withdrawal support sessions.

Most pupils in the foundation phase make good progress in developing their oracy skills. Most listen carefully to adults' instructions and respond appropriately. Most pupils are happy to chat with each other and with adults. By the end of the foundation phase, many speak clearly and confidently about their work. In key stage 2, most pupils listen attentively in class and engage well with their learning. Many make suitable progress in developing their speaking and listening skills.

Most pupils in the foundation phase make good progress in learning the links between letters and sounds. In Year 2, many pupils have a suitable range of reading strategies. For example, they use their phonics skills competently to decode unfamiliar words and use picture cues to assist their understanding. Around half of pupils read quite demanding texts confidently and with good expression.

Pupils' progress in reading is inconsistent in key stage 2. Many pupils in lower key stage 2 do not read confidently. Their understanding of how to solve unfamiliar words is insecure and, consequently, they make many errors when reading aloud. Few pupils in Year 4 use non-fiction books competently and they do not skim text to gain an overview or scan for specific information. The majority of pupils in Year 6 read clearly and accurately, but with some hesitancy and without lively expression. Nearly all pupils have a secure grasp of phonic strategies to help them to decode difficult words. All know how non-fiction books are structured. They are beginning to use indexes and glossaries to help them find specific information efficiently. Most more able pupils make suitable progress in developing higher-order reading skills, such as inference.

Pupils in the nursery class make a useful early start at mark-making and emergent writing. Later in the foundation phase, many pupils develop a clear writing style, forming letters appropriately with consistent size and spacing. They use capital letters and full stops correctly in their sentences, such as when they describe imaginary superheroes. Most pupils co-operate well, for example when they compose a group poem about the harvest festival. Many pupils' vocabulary broadens appropriately as they move from one class to the next. By the end of the foundation phase, a majority of pupils write independently, for instance in the style of a diary entry. They use exclamation marks to add dramatic interest when writing as a superhero. For example, 'Today I felt terribly upset because meteors were knocking buildings down, but I fixed it!' Overall, however, many pupils use their literacy skills in a narrow range of contexts in most areas of learning.

In key stage 2, very few pupils write independently and at length. They write for a narrow range of purposes and do not develop a range of writing styles to match their purpose and intended audience. Most pupils' writing takes the form of practice exercises or entries in prepared worksheets, which constrain their ability to express themselves clearly. Very few pupils use their literacy skills appropriately in other areas of the curriculum. For example, they compile frequent bulleted lists in science, such as when researching invertebrate animals, but rarely write any summaries or evaluations using continuous prose.

In the foundation phase, many pupils make steady progress in learning fundamental ideas and facts in mathematics. They perform calculations using two-digit numbers accurately. Many begin to solve problems, such as predicting the number of cubes required to build flights of steps, and begin to investigate the way in which different shapes fit together. However, pupils rarely apply their numeracy skills appropriately in other areas of the curriculum. Many pupils in key stage 2 make suitable progress in developing their number skills but they do not develop appropriate skills and knowledge in other areas of mathematics, such as problem solving. Neither do pupils apply their numeracy skills often enough and at a suitable level in other subjects.

Most pupils in the foundation phase progress well in acquiring skills in information and communication technology (ICT). For example, they program toy robots competently, using basic sets of instructions. In key stage 2, most pupils make good progress in developing their ICT skills. They use a broad range of educational and commercial software for a variety of purposes. For example, they enter information about their favourite films into a database, which they then search to identify the mode and median of pupils' choices. They use word processing software confidently to simulate newspapers reporting the Swansea blitz during the Second World War. Many pupils search the internet confidently to seek information for their topic work, remembering how to stay safe when online.

In the foundation phase, many pupils respond appropriately to instructions in Welsh. They give the Welsh names for colours and count to ten correctly. Many pupils in key stage 2 read simple Welsh texts with good understanding. They use their growing Welsh vocabulary well in a variety of basic sentence patterns that they practise regularly. However, few pupils have sufficiently quick recall to sustain a simple conversation.

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

The school is a calm nurturing environment where nearly all pupils feel safe and happy. They are respectful to each other and to staff and visitors. For example, many pupils hold doors open for visitors, greeting them politely. Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner and speak confidently to adults in a range of situations. They behave very well in lessons and on the playground. Most pupils engage positively in their learning and settle well to their tasks. They listen attentively to their teachers and sustain their concentration well, often for inappropriate lengths of time.

Nearly all pupils know how to keep healthy through taking regular exercise and eating a healthy diet. For example, most pupils eat fruit and choose water to drink at

break times. Around half of pupils take part in at least one extra-curricular activity and many of these provide vigorous exercise, including netball, football and badminton clubs. Nearly all pupils participate in the 'Daily Mile' initiative, which is having a positive effect on their health and wellbeing. Most pupils understand how to stay safe online and even young pupils speak knowledgeably about alerting adults to anything unusual on the computer.

Many pupils take on responsibilities willingly. Pupil groups, such as the eco committee, school council and prefects, are keen to help others and make improvements around the school. For example, the eco committee is monitoring energy usage and improving recycling arrangements.

Most pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly and they arrive on time, ready to learn.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**

Although teaching in the foundation phase is better than in key stage 2, the overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement. Nearly all teachers and support staff have strong working relationships with pupils. Most staff provide pupils with beneficial support and use praise and encouragement sensitively to develop pupils' confidence. However, the quality of teaching varies across the school and, in too many classes, it does not engage or challenge pupils well enough.

In a few classes, teachers modify tasks skilfully to match the needs of pupils of differing abilities. However, in many cases, the pace of learning is too slow and there is an inappropriate balance between teacher-talk and pupil activity. As a result, most pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop as independent learners and are unable to complete tasks to an appropriate standard. Most teachers provide positive and encouraging oral feedback to pupils during lessons. However, their written comments are not helpful enough to enable pupils to improve their work. Assessment for learning strategies are underdeveloped and teachers rarely give sufficient opportunities for pupils to respond to marking and feedback.

Teachers are beginning to make appropriate long-term plans that provide a suitable framework for the curriculum as pupils move through the school. These plans take note of the national literacy and numeracy framework and make suitable provision for the digital competence framework. However, teachers' plans for the delivery of areas of learning and subjects across the school are inconsistent and lack cohesion. For example, teachers set tasks that are inappropriate for pupils' stage of learning and do not give enough opportunities to develop pupils' skills meaningfully across the curriculum. There are few planned opportunities for pupils to write in a range of genres.

The teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 focuses too heavily on number work. Teachers rarely plan problem-solving activities and, when pupils occasionally tackle these, the tasks lack sufficient challenge. For example, in a rugby themed activity where pupils found right angles and shapes, the work was undemanding. Planning for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in, for example, science and topic work is limited.

In the lower foundation phase, teachers plan appropriate activities for pupils to use the outdoors, for example by developing their skills in riding scooters and balance bikes. Teachers plan activities in the very recently developed independent learning area suitably.

Learning experiences in key stage 2 do not always meet the needs of the full range of learners. In too many classes, teachers do not match the planned tasks sufficiently well to pupils' starting points. Often, this is because their expectations of the standards that pupils can achieve are not high enough. For example, teachers use worksheets too often and this limits opportunities for pupils to write at length and in their own words. As a result, across the school, activities do not challenge more able pupils well enough or provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their writing or numeracy skills. Overall, provision for subjects other than English, mathematics and science is inadequate in key stage 2.

### **Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement**

This is a caring community where staff and pupils show a high level of respect for each other. Staff understand and respond to pupils' emotional and social needs well.

The school has revised recently its systems for tracking all pupils' academic progress, wellbeing and behaviour. However, these systems rely on the accuracy of teachers' assessment, which lack consistency and tend to be overgenerous. Teachers use information from tracking to identify pupils who will benefit from a range of interventions in small group settings. These meet pupils' needs well. There is less effective support for pupils within classes in key stage 2, because tasks and resources do not match pupils' needs well enough.

The additional learning needs co-ordinator makes appropriate arrangements to identify, support and monitor pupils with additional learning needs across the school. Pupils' individual education plans are clear and pupils understand their targets. The school provides a wide range of support activities to address pupils' individual needs. For example, there is a thorough basic skills programme for key stage 2 pupils and an early language support programme for pupils in nursery and reception classes. As a result, pupils make suitable progress towards their individual targets in withdrawal group sessions. Staff work well with a wide range of specialist services, including educational psychologists and speech and language therapists who provide beneficial advice and support for pupils. The school keeps parents of pupils with additional learning needs involved and well informed.

There are appropriate arrangements to encourage healthy eating and drinking. The school provides pupils with a range of opportunities to consider their health and wellbeing through regular physical activities, such as the 'Daily Mile'.

The school promotes pupils' moral and social development effectively in assemblies and through personal and social skills lessons. For example, pupils talk about a range of emotions and describe how they can help their friends, should they experience negative feelings. However, the school does not promote pupils' spiritual development adequately.

Whole school celebrations and productions, including Christmas concerts, celebrations on St. David's Day and sports days, promote the school's strong community ethos. However, arrangements to promote pupils' cultural development through art, music and drama are underdeveloped.

The headteacher promotes a very positive relationship with parents and the community. A range of communication methods, such as newsletters and text messages, keep parents well informed about the work of the school. The headteacher has involved the local college in creating a family learning area where parents and grandparents are welcome to take part in activities with their children.

The school has introduced a range of strategies to improve attendance and rates have improved over the last three years. Attendance is currently close to the school's target.

Arrangements for safeguarding do not meet requirements and give some cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**

The headteacher has a clear focus on promoting the wellbeing of all pupils. Since her appointment, she has introduced a number of initiatives that are proving successful in raising pupils' self-esteem. She has identified shortcomings in the effectiveness of the school's senior leadership team and is working with a partner school to develop senior leaders. However, these arrangements are recent and there have been few noticeable effects.

The headteacher has identified areas where teachers are not providing pupils with a full range of worthwhile learning experiences and has introduced a number of curriculum reforms. As a result, many teachers have revised their planning so that the foundation phase curriculum is becoming broad, balanced and stimulating. However, the impact on teaching and the quality of the curriculum in key stage 2 has been less effective. The curriculum remains narrow and does not encourage pupils to use their skills in a range of contexts.

Activities to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are relatively new as is the provision for the management of staff performance. Senior leaders do not challenge robustly the underperformance of teaching staff, which results in too few teachers improving their practice. Although many staff have undertaken an extensive range of courses and training in the last year, the impact on pupil outcomes or standards of teaching is not clear. The sharing of expertise within the school, and between other schools, is underdeveloped.

The self-evaluation report identifies many areas for improvement, but the process for deciding priorities for the school improvement plan is not clear and does not involve all staff and other relevant stakeholders. The improvement plan lists many actions to be completed and sits alongside other plans for improvement from the consortium, school improvement group and partner school. Consequently, senior leaders are working on a range of important initiatives, but their work lacks focus because the school identifies too many areas for development at once. In addition, the priorities that the school identifies are not always those that will make the most difference to the school.

The governing body acts as a supportive friend. However, members do not currently take an active role in setting the school's strategic direction or contributing to self-evaluation and school improvement planning. Governors do not challenge the school to improve its performance robustly enough.

Governors ensure that spending decisions support priorities in the improvement plan. For example, the school has suitable levels of resources in many areas, with a good stock of computers and other equipment. However, the outdoor learning areas for pupils in the foundation phase are not well developed. Senior leaders ensure that the school uses its specific grants to support priorities. However, leaders do not evaluate how effective spending is on raising standards for pupils, particularly those who are eligible for school meals.

## 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.

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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