



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

A report on

**St Illtyd's Primary School
Llanhilleth
Abertillery
Blaenau Gwent
NP13 2JT**

Date of inspection: October 2017

by

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

About St Illtyd's Primary School

St Illtyd's Primary School is in the village of Llanhilleth, near Abertillery in the county of Blaenau Gwent. There are 216 pupils on roll between the ages of 3 and 11, including 30 who attend the nursery on a part-time basis.

Approximately 27% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity and come from homes where English is the main language. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language and no pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school identifies that 26% of pupils have additional learning needs. This is above the national average. A very few pupils have statements of special educational need.

The last inspection of the school was in March 2012. The headteacher took up her post in January 2017.

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 headteacher is having a positive impact on many aspects of the life and work of the school since her appointment earlier this year. She has restructured the senior leadership and teaching teams and made sure that all members of staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. Pupils, parents, teachers and leaders now share a common vision for pupils to be the best that they can be. However, this work is relatively recent and is not yet bringing about improved outcomes for pupils. Many pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points as they move through the school. Most develop good numeracy skills, but their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are underdeveloped. Nearly all pupils enjoy school. Many are beginning to take on roles to help develop the work of the school, for example through the school council. School leaders identify accurately areas for improvement and plan effectively to improve these. For example, they provide a good range of interventions to support pupils' development in speaking and listening, literacy skills and emotional wellbeing.

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	Adequate and needs improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' speaking skills in both English and Welsh
- R2 Raise the standards of pupils' reading and ICT skills
- R3 Adapt teaching to meet the needs of all pupils consistently
- R4 Ensure that the newly established leadership team implement improvement priorities successfully
- R5 Improve the ability of governors to challenge school leaders effectively

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

A majority of pupils begin school with skills and understanding below the level expected for their age. As they move through the school, many pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points. However, a minority do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. Boys and pupils eligible for free school meals often underperform in comparison to other pupils.

In the foundation phase, many pupils listen well to adults and to each other. A minority of pupils have weak speaking skills when they start school. However, by the end of Year 2 many pupils speak clearly. In key stage 2, most pupils listen carefully and offer appropriate contributions to discussions. For example, pupils in Year 6 ask relevant questions during a role play activity in an air raid shelter to help them to understand what life was like for children in the Second World War. However, many pupils throughout the school are not able to extend their talk beyond simple questions and answers. For example, they find it difficult to explain their reasoning or add additional information to a discussion.

Many pupils in the foundation phase make suitable progress in reading. By Year 2, most pupils know the sounds that letters make and use these effectively to help them read new words. They read simple texts aloud well, however they find it difficult to answer questions about what have read or to explain what has happened in the text. In key stage 2, many pupils use their reading skills appropriately to help them research information, for example from non-fiction books or internet search engines. Many pupils show a good understanding of what they are reading and older pupils make inferences from the text. For example, they find clues to establish that a character is a villain. However, throughout the key stage, too many pupils do not have a wide enough range of strategies to help them read unfamiliar words.

Younger pupils in the foundation phase use their phonic knowledge to write simple words and short phrases well. In Year 2, many pupils write appropriately for a range of purposes both in their literacy lessons and across the curriculum. For example, they write effective explanations of how to stay safe when using the internet. In key stage 2, many pupils write appropriately in a suitable range of styles. They know how to use a range of writing techniques for effect, for example using similes to improve their descriptions. However, across the key stage, too many pupils make errors when spelling familiar, everyday words and they do not use basic sentence punctuation consistently well. Pupils in key stage 2 do not write to the same standard in their science and topic work as they do in their English work. This year, across the school, the way that pupils present their work has improved.

Throughout the school, pupils' Welsh skills are weak. In the foundation phase, most pupils understand and can use a few simple phrases and Welsh words. For example, they respond appropriately when asked their names, can name colours and count to 10. However, many pupils do not progress beyond this stage as they move through key stage 2. Although they understand a range of questions, for example about the weather or where they live, they have difficulty answering them independently.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop good number skills. Pupils in Year 2 use these skills well across the curriculum. For example, they use their data handling skills to find out which famous person most pupils in the class would like to meet. Pupils' numeracy skills develop well in their mathematics lessons as they move through key stage 2. Pupils in Year 5 understand, use and order numbers to two or three decimal places. Pupils in Year 3 work out the amount of sugar in different types of fizzy drinks. However, across the key stage pupils do not apply their numeracy skills often enough in their work across the curriculum.

Pupils have appropriate ICT skills. In the foundation phase, many pupils use a tablet computer to take digital photographs and to access stories in the reading corner. Pupils in key stage 2 use their skills effectively for research and understand how to locate relevant websites that are safe for them to use. However, pupils' understanding and use of spreadsheets and coding are underdeveloped.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Nearly all pupils feel safe and happy in school. They know whom to talk to if they need help or support. Most pupils understand how to keep healthy, for example by drinking water and eating fruit. Pupils in Year 5 organise and run a fruit tuckshop each day and this helps to ensure that all pupils in the school have access to healthy snacks at break times. Pupils across the school recently took part in a 'taster session' to help to decide on new lunch menus for the school. About half of the pupils in key stage 2 have begun to take part in the newly formed cross-country running club. They understand how exercise like this contributes to a healthy lifestyle. Most pupils understand how to keep safe when using the internet.

Many pupils concentrate appropriately on their learning and stay on task for appropriate lengths of time. In the foundation phase, a majority of pupils sustain their engagement in activities for suitable periods. Pupils are starting to have a say in what and how they learn, for example by choosing which famous people they would like to study. However, across the school, many pupils lack independence in learning and are too reliant on adults for support when carrying out tasks and activities. They do not have a sufficient vocabulary to help them to discuss their learning and the progress that they make. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world are underdeveloped. This means that they do not make links between learning in different parts of the curriculum. For example, when reading about volcanoes in a reading lesson, they do not use prior knowledge of volcanoes from their topic work to help them make sense of what they are reading. Pupils' problem solving and investigational skills are underdeveloped.

Recently, pupils throughout the school have taken more prominent leadership roles. All pupils took part in the election process to decide on a head boy and head girl for the school. This has helped them to understand how a democratic voting system works. Pupils have also taken on responsibilities to help to develop important aspects of the school's work through membership of groups such as the school council, the eco-committee, the 'Criw Cymraeg' and the digital leaders' group. However, their work is at an early stage of development and has had limited impact on the life and work of the school.

Many pupils behave sensibly in lessons and around the school. They show care and support for each other. For example, more able pupils in Year 3 support less able pupils to help them to use tablet computers to locate information about penguins.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement. The newly appointed headteacher has recognised this and has taken steps to bring about improvements. Nearly all classes in the foundation phase have teachers that are new to the school this year. These teachers have introduced improved teaching strategies based on sound foundation phase principles that are having a positive impact on pupils. Recently, staff have benefitted from a range of professional learning opportunities, including working with teachers from other schools. As a result, they use an appropriate range of teaching strategies effectively to interest and engage pupils. For example, pupils in Year 6 dress as evacuees for the day when learning about the Second World War. However, these changes are all relatively recent and have not yet had time to impact on outcomes for pupils. In about half of classes, teachers adapt work well to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities and link new learning well to what pupils already know. However, this is not consistent throughout the school. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Nearly all teaching assistants work effectively with groups and individual pupils and have a positive impact on the progress pupils make.

Most teachers provide good feedback to pupils to help them to understand what they do well and what they need to do to improve their work. In the most effective instances, this is done orally while pupils are working and it helps them to clarify their thinking and make immediate improvements. Teachers in Year 6 use an application that helps pupils to share their work instantly with the class. This is helping pupils to evaluate and improve their work quickly and effectively.

Teachers in the foundation phase have developed areas in their classrooms and outdoors that provide an appropriate range of learning experiences. For example, an art area allows pupils to create pictures following a sequence of visual instructions. Teachers have started to help pupils to make decisions about their learning. For example, Year 2 pupils chose to study Gareth Bale as part of their topic work. However, this is a recent development and is not yet consistent across the school. The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to take part in school visits, including a residential trip for pupils in Years 5 and 6. In addition, teachers plan visits for all pupils to take part in school trips that support the curriculum well, for example a Gruffalo Trail.

Teachers have improved plans for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Plans have clear lines of progression and worthwhile opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in all curriculum areas. However, not all teachers follow these plans well enough to ensure that all pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise and consolidate their reading, writing and number skills in all curriculum areas, particularly in key stage 2. The school provides limited opportunities for pupils to use and apply ICT skills. For example, although there are good opportunities for pupils to use programmable toys, curriculum planning for ICT does not build on this work effectively enough to extend pupils' understanding of coding as they move through key stage 2. In addition, ICT lessons provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in modelling.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

School leaders and teachers help pupils to understand their responsibilities as members of the school effectively. For example, teachers discuss the five school promises in class lessons and assemblies regularly. As a result, pupils understand the importance of these and how they help everyone to work together purposefully and promote wellbeing throughout the school. The respectful relationships between adults provide a good role model for pupils and help them to demonstrate care and concern for each other. School leaders have recently improved opportunities for pupils to take part in leadership groups. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in school assemblies, which help them to develop an understanding of the spiritual and moral aspects of religion. However, opportunities for pupils to learn about the lives of people from other cultures or about global issues are limited.

A good range of interventions support pupils' development in speaking and listening, literacy skills and emotional wellbeing. Well-trained practitioners, both within the school and from local authority teams, deliver these effectively. However, processes to monitor the effectiveness of these programmes and to identify which have the most impact on pupil progress are underdeveloped.

The school has comprehensive information about the progress that pupils make as they move through the school. New systems and processes to track pupils allow all staff to use this information effectively to enable them to have a good understanding of the abilities of their pupils. More recently, teachers and leaders have used this information more effectively to identify groups of pupils for intervention and support. Examples include the use of data to identify pupils to work with their parents to take part in a programme to develop their understanding of computer programming. However, the use of these tracking systems by all teachers to identify pupils needing support and inform their classroom teaching is in an early stage of development.

Staff provide a good range of information to parents to help them support their children's learning. For example, there is a learning leaflet for each year group and regular information about the importance of good attendance. School reports to parents provide comprehensive information on pupil progress and next steps for learning. A profile of every pupil allows pupils and parents to share useful information and teachers use these well to support pupils' transition into new classes. Pupils with additional needs have purposeful individual education plans, which are discussed with parents and reviewed regularly. The school tracks attendance effectively through regular liaison with educational welfare officers to ensure that families maintain good attendance.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop healthy lifestyles through regular physical activities, extra-curricular clubs such as cross country running and healthy eating projects. There are regular opportunities for performance, for example the school Eisteddfod and end of year concert. However, there are few opportunities to develop pupils' creative skills through the curriculum.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher and her team have established a clear vision and coherent direction for the school, since her appointment at the start of 2017. She has shared this with pupils, parents and governors and it underpins many of the new strategies that the school is implementing.

The headteacher has high expectations of herself, her staff and all pupils. She provides a good professional role model and works hard to develop an effective learning culture amongst the staff. The recently established leadership and support team share her vision for school improvement. However, as this team is new, it has yet to impact appreciably on school improvement priorities. The headteacher uses professional development sessions effectively to create a consistent approach to many school policies and procedures. For example, to develop a new teaching and learning policy and behaviour policy and to improve performance management processes. Staff are committed to improving the quality of teaching and to raising standards of pupils' outcomes and wellbeing. However, many of the recently implemented strategies and systems have not yet had time to embed consistently across the school and, as a result, have had little impact on pupil progress.

The headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The self-evaluation report is accurate and feeds appropriately in to the school improvement plan. She has addressed many important issues promptly, for example, health and safety, the staffing structure and establishing individually tailored job descriptions outlining specific expectations. These improvements are beginning to have a positive impact on the wellbeing of staff and pupils.

Staff have good opportunities for professional development, including visits to other schools to identify good practice. Many teachers have recently attended training programmes offered through the regional consortium. These are helping to improve teachers' understanding of their role and are increasing their expectations of what pupils can do.

The governing body is supportive of the direction in which the new headteacher is taking the school. Most governors understand the need for change and are willing to take very difficult decisions. For example, during recent months there has been a higher than normal turnaround of staff and the governing body has worked diligently with the headteacher to recruit new teaching staff. However, governors' understanding of self-evaluation and school improvement procedures is limited and this affects their ability to challenge the school constructively.

There are effective arrangements to manage the school's finances and resources. Leaders use grant money effectively to support targeted pupils, to purchase resources and to provide development opportunities that benefit both parents and pupils.

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:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2017: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 04/12/2017