



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

**A report on**

**Ty Isaf Infants & Nursery School  
Mill Street  
Risca  
Caerphilly  
NP11 6EF**

**Date of inspection: April 2018**

**by**

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

## About Ty Isaf Infants & Nursery School

Ty Isaf Infants and Nursery School is in Risca in Caerphilly. There are 155 pupils on roll, including 56 part-time nursery pupils. The school has a nursery class, two single-age classes and two mixed-age classes. It also hosts a specialist resource base class for foundation phase pupils with complex needs from across the local authority.

Over the last three years, around 21% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. The school identifies that approximately 23% of its pupils have additional learning needs. Both of these figures are close to the averages for Wales. A very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils are white British. No pupils speak Welsh at home. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language.

Ty Isaf Infant and Nursery School was last inspected in February 2013. The headteacher took up her post in September 2013 and the deputy headteacher joined the school in September 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

Ty Isaf Infant and Nursery School is an inclusive and nurturing school that provides its pupils with a rich range of learning experiences that develops their confidence and grows their self-esteem. All staff work together well to plan and deliver a curriculum that engages pupils effectively and helps them to improve their academic, physical and creative skills. As a result, most pupils make good progress from their starting points across all areas of learning. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide effective leadership and a clear sense of strategic direction to the school's work. They receive strong support from staff who all believe in and work towards achieving the school's vision.

<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 Ensure all staff develop pupils' early reading skills progressively and systematically
- R2 Ensure that assessment for learning strategies help pupils to understand better how to improve their learning
- R3 Improve pupils' writing and redrafting skills
- R4 Focus more effectively on the most important development actions to achieve consistent implementation in all classes

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

Many pupils enter nursery with speaking and listening skills around those expected for their age. Around half of pupils enter with reading and writing skills at the expected level. A minority of pupils have number skills at the level expected for their age. Only a very few pupils have skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing or number that are above the expected level for their age. By the end of Year 2, most pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Pupils make strong progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. They talk confidently about their experiences and engage well in conversations with each other and adults. For example, pupils in nursery feed the dogs in their role-play vet's surgery and talk about what the puppies need to grow big and strong. Older pupils retell stories successfully; they use descriptive language effectively to explain key parts of the Rama and Sita story and to describe how the characters are feeling. Most pupils use their language skills well to collaborate and negotiate, for example when den building or when explaining how many coins they need to pay for items in their shop.

During their time in school, most pupils develop a suitable range of reading strategies that help them to read unfamiliar words and work out the meaning of texts. However, younger pupils and those who find reading difficult do not always build their knowledge of sounds and blends systematically. More able pupils read fluently and with expression and have a good understanding of what they are reading. They can pick out key parts in the text that help them to justify their opinions. Pupils in Year 1 know the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts and explain well different features of books, such as the purpose of the blurb on the back cover. Many pupils use their developing reading skills well to follow written instructions and to access information from the internet.

By the end of Year 2, many pupils make good progress in developing their mark making and writing skills. Pupils in reception begin to understand the relationship between letters and sounds and start to write short statements using the beginning and end sounds of words. Older pupils write longer pieces and start to use adjectives well, for example when describing a forest as being dark and gloomy. Many pupils improve their letter formation and handwriting skills appropriately. More able pupils in Year 2 write well at length, for example when writing to a local supermarket asking it to donate shovels for the 'Big Dig'. Across the school, a minority of pupils do not have the skills necessary to redraft and improve their writing.

From a low baseline, many pupils make beneficial progress in their mathematical understanding. They begin to see patterns and relationships between numbers, for example, Year 1 pupils apply their knowledge of number bonds to 10 to help them work out bonds to 20. Many pupils develop their problem solving skills well and choose the correct operation to solve a problem. Pupils use their numeracy skills well across the curriculum, for example when measuring the girth of a tree to calculate its age.

Most pupils have strong information and communication (ICT) skills. By the end of Year 2, they use the internet confidently to find information and then convert it into their own words when making presentations and fact files. Pupils use a good range of data handling skills to create bar charts and simple databases, which they interpret appropriately. Most pupils are confident users of ICT. For example, they scan quick response (QR) codes to share their learning and give instructions to control on-screen characters.

Pupils develop strong Welsh skills as they move through the school. Many use Welsh as a natural part of their classroom activities and their play. For example, when riding bikes outside they ask pupils to stop in Welsh to let them pass and reception pupils switch between Welsh and English to describe the colour of the cakes in their bakery. Many pupils respond well to questions and instructions given through the medium of Welsh. Older pupils have good pronunciation and they read and write Welsh sentences and phrases to an appropriate level.

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

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy school and engage enthusiastically with a broad range of learning experiences in classrooms and in the outdoor learning spaces. Nearly all pupils have a secure understanding of the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices such as eating a balanced diet. Most pupils are eager to take part in physical play during lessons and at break times. They take full advantage of large play equipment such as rope swings and pedalled vehicles to support their physical development.

Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous and polite to each other, to staff and to visitors. Most pupils show good levels of independence when approaching new tasks, sustain interest in activities for extended periods and generally persevere to complete their work. They work well in collaboration with others, for example when creating group dance compositions.

An extensive range of pupil voice groups make a positive contribution to school life and support pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem. Groups such as the school council support school improvement, for example by suggesting that each pupil has a locker to help keep the school tidy. The eco council supports recycling and conservation successfully, for instance by monitoring the use of electricity. The junior road safety officers encourage pupils to use booster seats and wear seat belts when travelling in cars. They also look out for 'naughty parkers' when parents drop pupils off at breakfast club. Most pupils understand how to stay safe when using the internet. For example, Year 2 pupils explain the need to 'stop and think before they tap and click' to access a website.

Pupils are beginning to have a suitable input into curriculum planning. For instance, they make appropriate suggestions about what they would like to learn by writing 'I wonder' questions at the start of each topic. Older pupils are beginning to use a range of strategies to reflect on what they feel they have done well during lessons. However, pupils' overall understanding of how to improve their work independently is at an early stage of development.

Many pupils and parents respond positively to the school's focus on improving attendance, and pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. Despite the school's efforts, overall attendance has not improved enough in comparison to that of similar schools.

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

The school provides a stimulating range of well-planned and enriching learning experiences. It structures its curriculum effectively around a broad range of topics that interest and engage pupils well. As a result, most pupils respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment to the learning experiences on offer.

The provision for foundation phase is well developed and pupils have extensive opportunities to learn through active involvement. The classrooms and outdoor areas are stimulating places to learn. In addition to their direct teaching, teachers plan interesting opportunities for pupils to practise and embed their skills independently. For example, pupils develop their co-ordination skills by using hammers and nails to make aeroplanes out of balsa wood. Pupils have a wide variety of opportunities to choose how they want to learn and this helps many to develop their independent learning skills well.

The school provides extensive opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors. Pupils engage in purposeful outdoor learning challenges linked to all areas of learning. For example, pupils in nursery count out ten cucumbers to put in the wheelbarrow to feed the piglet. Teachers make beneficial use of the forest school area to engage pupils in a range of focused activities, such as making camouflage hats and dens and noticing seasonal changes.

Across the school, all teachers plan very effectively for the development of pupils' ICT skills within lessons and across the curriculum. Teachers' planning ensures that pupils build their skills progressively. Overall, the school has suitable arrangements to develop pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. However, teachers do not always apply these systematically and progressively across all classes, particularly when developing pupils' early reading skills. Teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to apply their skills across all areas of learning. For example, Year 2 pupils measure the height of plants and the perimeter of flowerbeds in Mr. McGregor's garden.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to visit local areas of interest and local businesses to support their learning. For example, they visit the local supermarket to enhance pupils' understanding of healthy foods and Fairtrade.

Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' Welsh language skills. They incorporate the language successfully into most lessons and whole school activities. Teachers develop pupils' understanding of key sentence patterns and vocabulary progressively and effectively. The school has a strong Welsh ethos and provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh culture and heritage.

The quality of teaching in the school is good. Most staff have a secure understanding of the philosophy and principles of effective foundation phase practice. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and set them stimulating tasks in the

indoors and outdoors that meet their needs well. The pace of learning is lively in most lessons and effective routines ensure that pupils engage purposefully and independently across all areas of learning. Many learning support assistants contribute effectively to the learning process by intervening sensitively to move pupils' learning forward.

All staff develop positive working relationships with pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour very well. This creates a supportive and purposeful atmosphere, which ensures that pupils are attentive and keen to learn.

Most teachers use questioning appropriately to assess pupils' previous understanding of learning. However, teachers do not always exploit opportunities to ask more open-ended questions to encourage pupils to reflect deeply on their learning. The school has many different systems to assess pupils' day-to-day learning. However, this variety of strategies and a lack of clarity around the purposes of assessment for learning mean that the strategies teachers use do not always move pupils' learning forward as well as they could.

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

The school's arrangements for the care, support and guidance of pupils are strong. They support pupils to take a full part in school life, to make good progress in learning and experience high levels of wellbeing. Staff establish effective working relationships with pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour positively and nurture enthusiasm for learning, play and friendship.

School leaders track pupils' progress and levels of wellbeing diligently. They use this information well to identify pupils who need additional support and to meet their needs effectively. For example, following an analysis of progress they deliver well-planned sessions to improve pupils' communication and literacy skills. Additional provision to support emotional and social development has a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem, confidence and readiness to learn. Pupils with complex additional learning needs receive high quality provision that helps them to make good progress. The school has beneficial links with specialist agencies that ensure high quality support and guidance for pupils and parents as needs arise. Arrangements to monitor and try to improve pupils' attendance are comprehensive.

Partnerships with parents are a notable strength at the school. Parents receive timely information about school events and their child's progress, for example through social media and a range of digital applications. Staff organise worthwhile events for parents to help them to learn alongside their child at school and to gain an understanding of the school's approaches to teaching. Parents value these opportunities greatly. Parents and grandparents contribute positively to the life of the school. For example, they make improvements to the school grounds during the 'Big Dig' and work alongside their children during shelter building activities.

The school's provision to support pupils to be physically active is highly effective. Staff ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to engage in physical activity during lessons and at playtimes. A good range of equipment enables pupils to take calculated risks and develop physical strength, for instance when playing on the ropes and climbing equipment. The range of outdoor play provision meets pupils' needs particularly well and supports most to be active, fit and healthy. The school has suitable and successful arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The school ensures that pupils from all backgrounds have regular opportunities to undertake a variety of roles and responsibilities, such as digital leaders and school ambassadors. This provision enables pupils to make a positive contribution to school life and develops their self-esteem and confidence.

Learning experiences provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their moral and spiritual awareness. For example, pupils identify key messages about respect, tolerance, diversity and right and wrong through stories from the Bible and other faiths. Activities, such as circle time, provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on important issues, for example how to engage in positive relationships. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to take part in cultural experiences, for instance through visits to theatres and museums. A good range of after school clubs, such as yoga, dance and ICT, supplements the school's provision effectively.

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

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

The headteacher has worked successfully with staff and the whole school community to create an inclusive school that provides pupils with a rich range of learning experiences, encourages their confidence and grows their self-esteem. Overall, senior leaders provide effective strategic leadership to the school's work. They support staff to understand and carry out their roles and responsibilities well. Staff work well together and contribute successfully to all aspects of school life.

The school provides very beneficial professional development opportunities for its staff. For example, the deputy headteacher has attended bespoke training for those new to deputy headship which has helped her to settle into her new leadership role quickly and effectively. Other staff have benefited from attending middle leadership courses or have taken part in British Council overseas trips to extend their knowledge and widen their experiences. Learning support assistants access useful training to help them to provide effective intervention programmes to improve pupils' reading and number skills. Leaders support teachers who are new to the profession well by arranging visits to other schools and in-house visits to allow more experienced colleagues to model practice and share ideas. The school makes good use of external consultants to help staff improve their understanding in areas such as numerical reasoning.

The school has an established and comprehensive system to evaluate its work and to monitor progress against its improvement priorities. All staff make valuable contributions that help the school to identify accurately its strengths and areas for improvement. However, the school sometimes tries to work on and monitor too many priorities and actions at once. This means that not all staff embed initiatives fully and consistently before moving onto the next priority.

The school has a good track record of bringing about improvement against national priorities. It has embedded the principles and philosophy of the foundation phase very successfully. It has made considerable progress in improving pupils' ICT and Welsh language skills.

Leaders and governors use the school's budget wisely. They allocate funding suitably to improvement priorities and to maintaining a high quality accommodation and resources for pupils. For example, they invested heavily in upgrading the school's ICT hardware. Leaders access and make good use of other funding streams. For example, they bid for funds to work with other infant schools to improve the outdoor learning environment.

The school has a suitable number of well-qualified staff and deploys them well to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. It uses its pupil development grant successfully and this has helped to close the gap in performance between pupils eligible for free school meals and other groups of pupils.

Governors know the school well and have an appropriate understanding of the school's progress against its priorities. Governors balance their role as supporters and challengers fairly. They use their experiences from outside education to suggest different ways of working or approaching a problem. For example, they helped leaders to refine the wording for the school's vision to make it meaningful and understandable to parents. The headteacher and members of the senior leadership team appreciate the good sounding board that governors provide.

## 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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