



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

A report on

**Abernant Primary School
Richmond Terrace
Abernant
Aberdare
RCT
CF44 0SF**

Date of inspection: March 2019

by

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

About Abernant Primary School

Abernant Primary School is in the village of Abernant, in the Rhonda Cynon Taf, local authority. There are 112 pupils on roll, including 6 part-time and 20 full-time nursery pupils. There are three mixed-age classes and a single-age reception class.

The three-year average for pupils eligible for free school meals is around 16%. This figure is slightly below the Welsh average of 18%. The school identifies around 28% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is above the national average of 21%. No pupils speak Welsh at home and very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The school's last inspection was in November 2011. The headteacher was appointed in September 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

Abernant Primary School is a happy and caring community where pupils feel safe and valued. Nearly all pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. As they move through the school, most pupils make good progress in reading and they develop effective speaking and listening skills. Provision in the nursery and reception classes supports pupils to make good progress in developing their early literacy and numeracy skills. However, pupils, particularly the more able, do not always build well enough on this positive start to achieve as well as they could. Most pupils who receive additional support to help them learn make good progress as they move through the school.

Leaders and staff work together purposefully to secure ongoing improvements in many aspects of the school's provision. However, leaders and governors do not always focus well enough on the most important issues requiring improvement or provide clear enough strategic direction for improving teaching and pupils' standards.

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	Good
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that school leaders implement improvement strategies effectively to secure improvements in the quality of teaching and learning
- R2 Improve the quality of teaching to ensure that all pupils receive the right level of challenge and develop as independent learners
- R3 Improve pupils' Welsh language skills
- R4 Improve provision to develop pupils' numeracy skills
- R5 Improve attendance
- R6 Address the health and safety issue that was raised during the inspection

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils' skills on entry to the school are lower than those expected for their age. During their time at the school, they make suitable progress from their starting points. However, more able pupils do not always make sufficient progress as they move through the school. Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress against their individual learning targets.

Many pupils' speaking and listening skills are developing well. They listen attentively to presentations and introductions and respond sensibly in lessons. For example, the youngest pupils in the foundation phase discuss confidently how to make a pizza and they make mature observations about the amount of water they need to put in a vessel before it overflows. By the end of the foundation phase, many pupils speak enthusiastically about their work and use an increasing range of relevant vocabulary and sentence patterns correctly. By Year 6, many express their ideas clearly and accurately, for example when debating home schooling versus traditional schooling.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop their early reading skills effectively. By the end of the foundation phase, they read fluently and re-tell stories confidently. They discuss their favourite characters well. Most pupils use their phonics skills successfully when reading unfamiliar words. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils read correctly with good understanding. They discuss the main events and characters in their current books effectively. Most pupils gather information from different sources independently. For example, Year 6 pupils gather evidence to include in written reports on climate change.

Across the school, pupils' progress in writing is inconsistent. In the foundation phase, most pupils spell simple words accurately and develop a suitable understanding of how to punctuate their work correctly. Many pupils understand and use the features of a variety of styles of writing appropriately. For instance, when recounting the story of the runaway pancake. In key stage 2, many pupils continue to make a sound progress in developing their writing skills in English lessons. The more able pupils use mature vocabulary and include appropriate facts to support their writing, for example when producing character descriptions of the boy who swam with piranhas. However, many pupils do not write often enough independently in literacy lessons or across other curriculum areas. Standards of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work vary too much across the school.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make sound progress in their mathematical development. They have strong number skills, and an appropriate grasp of shape and data. They apply these skills confidently in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. For example, many reception pupils apply their knowledge of addition and subtraction well when handling money to buy or sell goods in the 'supermarket' role play area. Most pupils in Year 2 create a simple database of favourite animals and use this to generate an accurate bar graph. Most key stage 2 pupils develop their knowledge of number well and have a sound understanding of how to collect and present data. However, pupils in key stage 2 do not always develop their knowledge of all areas of the mathematics curriculum to a suitable depth or apply their skills regularly enough in other areas of the curriculum.

Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe on the internet. The majority of pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing appropriately across the school. By the end of the foundation phase, many use tablet computers to record their work and use a variety of applications to support work in other subjects well. In key stage 2, most pupils search for information online competently and use a range of multi-media skills to present information, for example about old and new rollercoasters. They are beginning to develop simple data bases and to create their own programmes.

Many pupils understand the benefits of speaking Welsh and enjoy learning the language. The majority of pupils use Welsh confidently in familiar, formal contexts, but few have a wide enough vocabulary to engage successfully in simple conversations. However, progress in pupils' Welsh oracy skills is less well developed and their use of the language around the school is limited. Most pupils use their writing skills appropriately, for example to produce a fact file about a famous athlete. They read with suitable pronunciation but do not read simple texts fluently enough.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils speak confidently and proudly about their school and say that they feel safe, secure and well cared for. They are confident that adults will help them if they have any concerns. Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are kind and supportive of each other, which contributes soundly to the school's inclusive and caring ethos. Most pupils treat adults and visitors with respect and maturity

Most pupils speak confidently about their work and discuss current and previous work with enthusiasm. They enjoy the topics they study, and are generally willing to work hard. Most pupils engage positively in their learning and settle well to their tasks. Across the school, most pupils work effectively in pairs and groups. For example, in Year 6, most pupils are developing confidence and resilience when facing new challenges and change when working together to create an animation on space. Most pupils listen attentively to the views of others and deal well with opinions that are different from their own, for example when discussing racial discrimination.

A majority of pupils in key stage 2 are developing a suitable understanding of how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve their work. However, across the school, many pupils do not have enough of a say in what and how they learn. Many pupils' independent learning skills are very limited and they rely too much on adults to direct them in their learning.

A few pupils have additional leadership roles, which they enjoy. The eco council has made purposeful contributions to improve the school environment and to raise pupils' awareness of the importance of re-cycling and re-using. The newly established playground leaders are beginning to contribute appropriately by promoting exercise and wellbeing during break and lunchtimes. Recently, members of the school council organised a 'danceathon' promoting the importance of fitness through a fund-raising activity for a national children's charity. However, overall, the school council has a limited input to bring about change or to make improvements around the school.

Most pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep healthy through eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise. However, too many key stage 2 pupils do not make healthy choices about their diet, for instance eating crisps and chocolate at break times and drinking sugary drinks through the day. Most pupils enjoy taking part in physical activities, for example walking a mile three times a week around the school grounds. They participate actively in the school sports clubs, such as football, netball and dance.

Most pupils in key stage 2 understand the importance of regular attendance. However, in recent years, attendance rates have remained below average and do not compare well to those in other similar schools. Most pupils arrive at school on time in the mornings.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Most staff across the school have effective working relationships with pupils. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in all classes. As a result, classrooms are calm and respectful learning environments. Engaging topics such as 'Potions' and 'Truly Scrumptious' foster positive attitudes to learning amongst pupils.

In the nursery and reception classes, pupils have numerous opportunities to learn through active play or to direct their own learning in a vibrant indoor learning area. Staff plan activities that build on pupils' prior learning and support them to develop their skills well. For example, creating pictures of owls from materials found in the local park. Pupils are beginning to have opportunities to contribute ideas to topic related activities and teachers adapt learning experiences in response to these suggestions. For example, when listening to Roald Dahl's book Charlie and the Chocolate Factory reception pupils choose to draw self-portraits in melted chocolate. Older foundation phase pupils often receive too much direction from adults and complete too many low-level tasks that do not provide enough challenge.

Provision to develop pupils speaking, listening and reading skills is generally successful across the school. There are suitable arrangements to develop pupils' writing skills. However, pupils receive too few opportunities to apply these skills independently through writing at length in English lessons or in their work across the curriculum. Provision to develop pupils' mathematics and numeracy skills does not always support pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

Teachers' use of assessment for learning strategies is developing well. They introduce learning objectives to pupils effectively and set appropriate success criteria for them. There are regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and many pupils respond sensibly to written feedback. Teachers share instructions and explanations clearly and ask appropriate questions to extend and develop pupils understanding. However, teachers do not always have high expectations of pupils or challenge pupils who are more able well enough. This limits the pace of learning in lessons and pupils' progress over time.

Staff have begun to adapt their planning to prepare for the introduction of the new curriculum for Wales. Recently, they have introduced missions in Year 3 and Year 4 to encourage pupils to work together in small groups and to discover and explore various subjects. A good example of this is to research independently on famous

scientists and to make their own potions. Teachers are beginning to plan for the introduction of the digital competence framework. They provide suitable opportunities to enable pupils to use their ICT skills appropriately in various contexts such as creating a presentation on Malala, a human activist.

Teachers plan topic work suitably and hold an annual Eisteddfod to raise pupils' awareness and interest in the traditions and culture of the local area and Wales. A recent visit to St Fagans helped the pupils to improve their knowledge of Welsh history. A very few members of staff model the language well and regularly use incidental Welsh throughout the day. However, the provision does not support pupils, especially in key stage 2 to make enough progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school creates an inclusive environment for all its pupils. Staff encourage pupils positively to develop strong personal values, such as tolerance and fairness. They take time every morning to engage with pupils and check on their wellbeing. This helps pupils to be ready for learning and they work well with adults in an atmosphere of trust. School leaders have embedded effective behaviour systems that enable pupils to be respectful and safe.

There are robust systems for tracking pupils' progress. Teachers use a range of information appropriately to plan and provide additional support for individual pupils and groups of learners. For example, staff provide an effective programme to support vulnerable pupils to develop their social and emotional skills. Many pupils attend regular, bespoke sessions with teaching assistants in the 'calm corner' which provides a safe and nurturing space for them. This has a positive impact on raising self-esteem and helps most pupils to develop improved levels of confidence and engagement in school life.

The school's provision to support pupils with additional learning needs is sound. Staff identify pupils' additional learning and personal needs from an early age and provide them with effective support. A purposeful range of intervention programmes and strategies enables most pupils to make good progress in their learning. Individual education targets for pupils with additional learning needs are appropriate and pupils and parents are beginning to contribute to the process. The additional needs co-ordinator makes effective use of outside agencies such as Resilient Families, Behaviour Support Team and the Educational Psychology Service.

The school develops positive and productive working relationships with parents and communicates well with them through the school website, social media and newsletters. Parents value the half-termly shared learning workshops in the foundation phase and the termly meetings in key stage 2. These meetings provide parents with a thorough understanding of their child's progress and ideas to help them support their child's learning at home.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is effective. For example, there are purposeful opportunities for pupils to visit the church next door to participate in events such as a pretend wedding ceremony. Daily assemblies, visitors from the local church and suitable opportunities in a few classes, pupils learn

suitably about world religions and celebrations such as Diwali and the significance of Jewish artefacts. Staff develop pupils' creative skills appropriately through music activities, taking part in local concerts in the Coliseum Theatre and performing in community events annually. These experiences develop pupils' self-confidence, pride in themselves and in their ability to work with others.

Through a series of planned sessions by the police liaison officer, pupils develop a sound understanding of the dangers of smoking, drugs and alcohol. The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about healthy eating and drinking and ensures that there are opportunities for them to take part in physical education lessons. However, in key stage 2, adults do not challenge pupils' consumption of crisps and high fat snacks at breaktimes. Pupils are encouraged to bring a drink bottle each day, but this often contains sugary drinks.

The school provides a few useful opportunities for pupils to influence matters that affect them through the work of the school council and eco-committee. However, overall, the school provides very few opportunities for pupils to undertake leadership roles and pupils have limited impact on their wellbeing and on the day-to-day life of the school.

The headteacher has introduced a range of strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality, including working closely with the local authority. However, these approaches have a limited impact on improving attendance rates.

The inspection team brought a few health and safety issues to the school's attention during the inspection. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher has developed a vision that underpins the school's inclusive and caring ethos. This ensures that all staff and the school community collaborate well to ensure that pupils feel happy, safe and secure at school. Overall, the school's leadership ensures that many pupils make suitable progress during their time at the school.

There are suitable arrangements to distribute leadership responsibilities. These are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Leaders have identified that academic expectations and standards vary across the school. They have begun to address this, for instance by strengthening systems for reviewing with teachers the progress that each pupil makes. They now link this to their process for managing staff performance. These termly meetings ensure that staff have a better understanding of the standards pupils achieve. This is in the early stages of supporting improvement to a few aspects of the school's work, for instance in raising standards of reading.

The school undertakes a suitable range of self-evaluation activities. These include analysing pupils' performance data, scrutinising their work and observing lessons. These processes generally enable the school to identify useful improvement priorities. Through this, senior leaders have identified the need for improving pupils' numeracy skills. However, these recent improvements to leadership are yet to have

a beneficial effect on raising the overall standards that pupils achieve, particularly those pupils who are more able. In general, the pace of school improvement work has been slow over time.

Staff work as a strong team. Weekly meetings have started to focus effectively on matters relating to improving learning. The headteacher ensures that there are suitable opportunities for the professional development of teachers and support staff. All staff attend courses, receive in-house training and to work with other schools to view effective practice. These valuable opportunities have led to a notable improvement in pupils' behaviour and the quality of teachers written feedback to pupils' work.

The governing body is supportive of the school and carries out its statutory responsibilities efficiently. Through regular reports from the headteacher, analysing data and undertaking visits to the school, governors have a sound understanding of pupils' attainment and progress. They are beginning to challenge the school, and have recently become involved in the school's drive to improve overall attendance.

The headteacher, with the support of the governing body, manages the school budget efficiently. Leaders target finances appropriately. For example, additional funding is targeted purposefully to support pupils with additional learning needs. Good use is made of the pupil development grant to improve provision to develop the literacy numeracy and emotional skills of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. As a result, these pupils make sound progress from their starting points.

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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Publication date: 23/05/2019