



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

A report on

**Bedlinog Community Primary School
Hylton Terrace
Bedlinog
Treharris
Merthyr Tydfil
CF46 6RE**

Date of inspection: April 2019

by

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

About Bedlinog Community Primary School

Bedlinog Community Primary School is in the village of Bedlinog, in Merthyr Tydfil local authority.

There are 87 pupils on roll, including 12 of nursery age. The three-year rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 20%, which is slightly below the average for Wales. The school has identified approximately 19 % of pupils with additional learning needs, which is below the all-Wales average of 21%. Very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school received its last core inspection in May 2013 and the acting executive headteacher has been in post since November 2018.

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

Bedlinog Community Primary School is an inclusive community where almost all pupils feel safe and happy. The school's caring ethos ensures that pupils and staff feel valued and promotes respect and equality successfully. The strong working relationship that exists between pupils and staff ensures that most have a positive attitude to learning. The staff also have a purposeful relationship with parents and other members of the community. This strengthens the values, care, support and guidance it gives its pupils and provides them with rich and relevant learning experiences that enhance the provision and promotes the heritage and culture of Wales successfully. The positive learning environment encourages pupils to take pride in their work and to contribute appropriately to school life. Most teachers plan engaging activities for pupils that sustain their interest and enjoyment in learning and often adapt their planning successfully to encompass their ideas and interests.

Following a period of considerable instability in terms of senior leaders, the school now benefits from strong leadership. The acting executive headteacher, staff, pupils and governors have worked successfully together to develop a clear vision that has the full support of the school community.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the reading skills of all pupils and develop their interest and enthusiasm for reading
- R2 Provide pupils with suitable opportunities to develop and apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3 Ensure that all staff provide pupils with learning experiences that meet their needs and accelerate their progress in the indoor and outdoor environments

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils enter school with literacy and numeracy skills that are slightly below those expected for their age. As they move through school, most make appropriate progress in their learning. Most pupils with additional learning needs make appropriate progress in meeting their targets.

From an early age, most pupils develop good speaking and listening skills. They listen attentively to staff and each other and respect their peers' views and ideas maturely. Younger pupils speak clearly using full sentences when talking about what makes a good friend. Many Year 2 pupils talk enthusiastically and give sensible reasons for which animals make the best pets. Many older pupils in key stage 2 use extended vocabulary appropriately during classroom discussions. For example, they use words such as 'ambitious, determined and inspirational' when discussing the qualities of their chosen superstar.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of learning Welsh. A majority of pupils greet each other in Welsh and understand basic instructions. Many foundation phase pupils ask and answer simple questions using known patterns and vocabulary, for example when discussing the weather. Many key stage 2 pupils express their likes and dislikes with increasing confidence and a majority are beginning to extend their answers by giving reasons for their choices.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop an appropriate understanding of the sounds that letters make. By Year 2, many read familiar words well and use their understanding of phonics to begin to work out more challenging words. In key stage 2, many pupils read a suitable range of texts with increasing confidence. However, they do not always increase the range of techniques enough to gain an in-depth understanding of more challenging text. By Year 6, a majority are beginning to use higher order reading skills appropriately. For example, they use skimming and scanning to identify important facts about superstars when preparing to write a biography. However, a minority of pupils do not have reading skills that are good enough to allow them to develop an interest and enthusiasm for reading.

Many key stage 2 pupils read simple Welsh text with increasing understanding. For example, older pupils in key stage 2 gather relevant information from a leaflet to plan a visit to the cinema.

From a young age, many pupils develop appropriate writing skills. Most younger pupils demonstrate suitable pencil control. They form letters correctly and are beginning to write simple sentences to convey meaning. Most Year 1 pupils use an increasing range of vocabulary in their writing. For example, they describe a bonfire night as an 'explosion of colour'. By Year 2, most pupils write basic sentences well when recounting stories. Their spelling is generally accurate and many use basic punctuation with increasing accuracy. Across key stage 2, many pupils write with increasing confidence in a range of genres and have a good understanding of the structure of different text types. Most older pupils plan their writing well and create interesting settings and characters when writing a story based on the Titanic, for example.

As they progress through school, a majority of pupils write basic sentences in Welsh using known language patterns and vocabulary. For example, Year 6 pupils write a letter to introduce themselves to a friend at a local school successfully.

Most pupils develop a suitable range of numeracy skills as they progress through school. In the foundation phase, many read and write numbers correctly and develop an appropriate understanding of number, space and shape. For example, Year 2 pupils understand standard units of measure and make sensible suggestions when estimating height. As they progress through key stage 2, many pupils continue to develop their understanding of number effectively. For example, many older pupils arrange positive and negative numbers accurately using a human number line. Many are beginning to identify the information they need to solve problems successfully, for example when calculating the difference in temperature ranges in countries across the world. However, pupils' reasoning skills and application of numeracy skills across the curriculum are less well developed.

Most pupils develop an appropriate range of information, and communication technology (ICT) skills as they progress through school. In the foundation phase, many pupils use technology to draw pictures, create graphs and record their work using word processing skills. In key stage 2, most pupils use tablets and laptops to access an increasing range of programmes across learning platforms to support their learning. For example, they prepare a fact file about Dylan Thomas and document the discoveries of Mary Anning successfully. Many upper key stage 2 pupils use their email accounts to send homework to their teacher. This allows them to practice their technology skills in worthwhile contexts. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet and are careful not to share personal information on line. They prepare presentations to share this important information with other pupils and parents. However, pupils' use of spreadsheets and databases is less well developed.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy school and feel safe within its caring, and nurturing environment. They know where to turn if they have any concerns, and many make good use of opportunities to share their worries in a mature way, such as when using the class 'worry catcher'.

Nearly all pupils behave very well in class and around the school. They are polite and welcoming towards each other, staff and visitors. Nearly all pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner and speak confidently to adults in a range of situations. Many pupils engage positively in their learning and settle well to their tasks. This contributes towards developing an effective learning environment where all pupils feel respected and encouraged to learn.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They are enthusiastic learners, sustain concentration successfully and remain on task for suitable periods. They work well in pairs and groups to develop their collaborative skills. For example, they measure and record their heights in the playground and discuss the qualities that make a good friend in the foundation phase. Many key stage 2 pupils persevere well when tasks become more challenging. They make good use of the school's strategies to promote independent learning. For example, they refer to the 'B Wall'

before asking the teacher for help. Recently, pupils have started to make decisions about what and how they learn. This has given them more ownership about what they learn and has increased their interest in learning.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily. They take advantage of regular opportunities to participate in physical activities during lessons and break times, and partake in the range of after school clubs, such as the healthy me sports club, and football club. As a result, almost all have a good awareness of the effect this has on their bodies.

Many pupils contribute successfully to their own wellbeing and that of peers. For example, many have a role as a playground or reading leader, supporting one another and younger pupils successfully on the yard during playtimes and lunchtimes. Members of the pupil voice committee have recently taken on leadership roles and responsibilities that are beginning to impact positively on the life and work of the school. For example, they have interacted confidently with outside agencies to inform the community of the dangers of dog fouling. This instils in them a social conscience and prepares them well for the future.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Teachers and support staff create positive working relationships with pupils. They apply effective behaviour management strategies effectively, which creates a positive and calm learning environment. Most teachers plan engaging activities that sustain pupils' interest and enjoyment in learning. In a minority of the most successful lessons, the pace of learning is swift and teachers make good use of questioning to challenge pupils effectively. They use a range of strategies successfully to support pupils' learning. For example, they use 'pit stops' to pause learning and help pupils to know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. In the few lessons where teaching is less effective, teachers do not plan tasks and activities well enough to challenge pupils at a suitable level or to extend their skills purposefully.

Most teachers make appropriate use of learning objectives and success criteria to set the context and expectations for pupils' learning. For example, they use the 'Learning Ladybird' and 'Successful Spiders' to ensure that younger pupils understand the task and what they need to do to succeed. Teachers provide pupils with meaningful feedback that identify aspects that they need to improve. For example, they encourage older pupils to review their work and re-draft paragraphs to make their writing more interesting.

Staff are beginning to develop a more creative approach to planning for the new curriculum with a clear focus on its four core purposes. They adapt their planning successfully to incorporate pupils' views and ideas about how and what they learn. For example, nursery staff use their pupils' interest in space as the focus for planning 'The Explorers' topic. This has improved pupils' engagement in learning.

Teachers have recently started using an online tracking and planning tool, which enables them to plan for the development of skills across the curriculum. Most teachers plan relevant opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum; however, the planning for developing pupils' numeracy skills is not as well

developed. The school generally implements the foundation phase philosophy appropriately. However, opportunities for pupils to learn effectively in the outdoors is limited.

The school makes effective use of the local community to enhance the curriculum and to provide pupils with rich and relevant learning experiences. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 3 worked with the local rivers trust to investigate ways to preserve local rivers and their habitat and a visitor from the Hindu community came to talk about their faith and celebrations.

Teachers promote the heritage and culture of Wales successfully by celebrating St Dwynwen's Day and St David's Day, for example. Key stage 2 pupils attend events such as the Urdd Jambori and sing Welsh songs enthusiastically. They learn about the Urdd's Message of Goodwill, whose founder, the Reverend Gwilym Davies was born in the village. The annual school Eisteddfod gives pupils the opportunity to sing, recite and perform traditional dancing. This enhances pupils' feeling of belonging to the local community and Wales as a country.

Enrichment opportunities beyond the classroom empower pupils to understand their role as global citizens. They support the work of different charities that help others less fortunate than themselves, for example the NSSPC and Children in Need, whilst a visit to Bristol Zoo increases their understanding of the need to look after animals and their habitats for future survival. Pupils in the 'Enterprise Club' take part in the annual 'Enterprise Troopers', where they make a range of differently priced parcels for events such as mother and father's day. This enhances pupils' entrepreneurial skills effectively.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is an inclusive community, which ensures that almost all pupils feel safe and happy in school. The caring ethos that exists ensures that everyone is valued and promotes respect and equality successfully. The learning environment encourages almost all pupils to take pride in their work and to contribute fully to the life of the school.

The school has purposeful relationships with parents and members of the local community that supports its values successfully and broadens the care, support and guidance for pupils well. For example, the 'learn with me' sessions provide pupils with beneficial opportunities for them to work with their parents in school on developing aspects of literacy, numeracy and digital activities. This has improved pupils' attitudes to learning.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking, and encourages pupils to stay fit through a good range of after school clubs, school visits. A residential visit for the older pupils encourages teamwork and trust while taking part in outdoor activities. School concerts, role-play activities and presentations to parents give pupils effective and worthwhile opportunities to perform in public. This fosters their self-confidence successfully.

The school has recently introduced appropriate systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress and wellbeing. Although relatively new, staff use these systems

appropriately to identify pupils who need additional support or those who are not making good enough progress in their learning. Learning support assistants work well in partnership with the teachers and make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress by promoting a range of suitable intervention groups and learning activities. As a result, the provision for pupils identified as having additional learning needs is suitable in helping many make expected progress. Recent improvements and valuable links with the other school in the informal federation are beginning to ensure consistency and robustness in the school's procedures in this area of its work. Individual education plans include focused targets to promote pupils' progress effectively. However, the views of pupils and parents' are not currently considered when writing and reviewing these plans.

The school works successfully with outside agencies to develop pupils' attitudes to learning. For example, working closely with the education welfare officer has raised pupils' attendance levels and working with the educational psychologist has supported pupils with additional needs successfully. Staff understand, identify and respond to pupils' emotional, social and behavioural needs well. There are effective strategies and systems in place to support pupils' wellbeing, including a daily mindfulness session where teachers provide them with opportunities to share their emotions and discuss sensitive issues in a discrete way. Arrangements to support pupils to make sensible lifestyle choices and to understand the importance of equality and respecting diversity are effective and include working with the police and community nurse, for example. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Collective worship provides valuable opportunities for pupils to reflect on values, such as sharing, kindness and determination and to develop an understanding and appreciation for the Welsh heritage and culture. For example, pupils discuss their right to go to school to learn in a safe and welcoming environment, comparing themselves to others who are less fortunate than they are.

The school has established a pupil voice committee, which provides them with opportunities to make responsible decisions that influence how and what they learn. For example, pupils' views contributed to the school's new motto 'Strong roots, Successful Future'. This enhances pupils' feeling of belonging.

The school provides pupils with rich opportunities to develop their understanding of those less fortunate than themselves, developing their empathy for others and raising their awareness of the work of a range of charities. Pupils have numerous opportunities to raise money for selected charities, which gives them a sense of pride and achievement in helping others, and develops their understanding of the needs of their local and wider community. Many pupils have an understanding of their rights and responsibilities and respect cultural differences. However, pupils' awareness of issues in the wider world and their roles as global citizens is less developed.

Leadership and management: Good

In a very short time, the executive headteacher has had a significant impact on the work of the school. He has established a clear vision and a firm strategic direction for future improvement. He has involved staff, pupils and governors very successfully in developing this vision and has implemented change in a positive way

that has the full support of the whole school community. He has begun to share responsibilities effectively with the acting deputy headteacher and the teaching staff. For example, they are taking the lead in improving important areas such as literacy, numeracy and ICT. This is helping to create a collaborative ethos at the school where all staff work well together to improve pupils' outcomes and wellbeing.

The executive headteacher has a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. He has drawn on the knowledge of staff, pupils and governors to help to provide an accurate picture of the school's work. He has put in place comprehensive monitoring processes that draw effectively on a wide range of first hand evidence. These include scrutiny of pupils' work, listening to learners and observations of teaching and learning. Leaders use the information from these activities purposefully to evaluate successful aspects of the school's work and those that need to improve. Staff responded quickly to work on the school improvement priorities identified in the autumn term and in a short space of time important aspects of the school's work have improved. For example, as a result of a whole school focus on improving pupils' wellbeing, levels of attendance have risen.

Leaders have increased the attention that the school pays to national priorities. Staff have started to plan for the revised curriculum for Wales. Teachers and pupils have considered ways of incorporating the four core purposes of the curriculum into pupils' learning experiences. As a result of this work, pupils have a greater say in what they learn. For example, pupils develop mind maps outlining the science, art and mathematics activities that they would like to include in their topics on the animal kingdom.

The executive headteacher has improved the opportunities that staff have to take part in professional learning activities. He has recently introduced formal performance management processes. Both teachers and learning support assistants now have regular opportunities to review their performance and set objectives for development. These objectives link well to both whole school priorities and individual learning needs. Staff have good opportunities to attend training events and to visit and learn from other schools. For example, teaching assistants have had training to help them to deliver programmes that support pupils' social and emotional development and teachers visited a school with strong practice in mathematics in order to improve their own work in this area of the curriculum. This focus on improving teaching is beginning to have a positive impact, for example, there is a consistent approach to providing feedback to pupils about what they do well and what they need to improve.

Members of the governing body have an improved understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The executive headteacher gives them accurate and relevant information, including about the standards pupils achieve and the school's finances. He provides them with good opportunities to take an active role in evaluating the school's work. For example, many governors recently took part in a learning afternoon which focused on important aspects of the school's work including pupils' attitudes to learning and the support that pupils with additional needs receive. Because of these activities, governors have a realistic picture of the school's strengths and shortcomings. They understand the priorities for improvement and can now start holding the leaders to account for the progress the school makes against these.

Following a period of financial uncertainty, there are effective arrangements in place to manage the school's finances and resources. The informal federation with a neighbouring school is helping to reduce staffing costs, for example by having the same headteacher and additional learning needs coordinator for both schools. The executive headteacher uses grant funding effectively to support pupils who need additional support, for example to provide interventions that support pupils' literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. He has improved the learning environment to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils. The school is now bright and attractive with displays that stimulate pupils and promote learning.

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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