



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

A report on

**Ynysowen Community Primary School
Aberfan Road
Aberfan
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 4QQ**

Date of inspection: February 2019

by

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

About Ynysowen Community Primary School

Ynysowen Community School is in Aberfan, in Merthyr Tydfil local authority.

There are 275 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 11 years, including 46 who attend the nursery on a full-time basis and 15 who attend two learning resource bases provided by the local authority. The learning resource bases cater for pupils with complex needs and hearing impairment.

On average, around 30% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is significantly above the national average of 18%. The school identifies about 37% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is higher than the national average of 21%. No pupil speaks Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up her post in January 2010. The school's previous inspection was in July 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

Strong and enthusiastic leadership contributes successfully to this exceptional school. Leaders and teaching staff work together extremely well for the benefit of all pupils. They plan collaboratively to sustain its strong record for pupils' continuous attainment. With the support of highly skilled and supportive governors, leaders create an ethos to ensure that pupils' progress and well-being underpins all its activities.

Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. They create a stimulating and well organised learning environment that engages nearly all pupils exceptionally well. Teachers plan innovative activities that ensure that nearly all pupils enjoy their learning and become independent learners.

Pupils take an active part in their own learning by reflecting on their work and making appropriate suggestions that inform future planning very successfully. Their contributions to all aspects of school life is exceptional and influences their enriched experiences creatively. Pupils' attitudes to learning is exemplary. They show extensive care and respect to both their peers and adults.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Excellent
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Excellent
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Excellent

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that pupils that are more able have consistent opportunities to extend their Welsh skills further

What happens next

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the way pupil voice permeates throughout all aspects of its work for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

Most pupils enter the school with language, numeracy and social skills that are significantly lower than that expected for their age. However, nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs make good or exceptional progress as they move through the school.

Across the school, nearly all pupils listen exceptionally well to adults and to each other. From an early age, nearly all pupils in the foundation phase express their ideas and opinions enthusiastically, for example whilst discussing healthy milkshakes. They choose a variety of words effectively to explain and communicate ideas successfully. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 participate in lively dialogue about their work. By Year 6, most pupils are extremely articulate and confident speakers. They use mature vocabulary and give extended answers when discussing their activities. For example, they support their thoughts and views about discrimination highly effectively when discussing the history of race equality.

Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase enjoy reading and develop their reading skills very well. Most pupils retell events from a story successfully and vary intonation, voice and pace successfully. By Year 2, most pupils read with confidence, for example when reading the names of famous landmarks in Cardiff. In key stage 2, most read with increasing expression and show a clear understanding of the content and context of a range of different books. Nearly all pupils skim and scan information effectively and retrieve specific information accurately, for example when gathering information about King Arthur. By Year 6, nearly all pupils have sophisticated reading skills, for example inferring and interpreting information successfully from biographies of the Suffragettes.

In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils' writing skills develop highly effectively. From an early age, nearly all pupils make exceptional progress in their mark making in a variety of enriched tasks in the creative areas and in the outside area. They form letters and simple sentences confidently to communicate their ideas successfully, for example when writing a letter about an evil pea. By Year 2, many pupils write imaginatively and use original vocabulary to express their ideas, for example, when using adjectives to describe their superhero as being 'upsetting and devastated'. In key stage 2, nearly all pupils develop their writing skills confidently and use creative language effectively. For example, they use persuasive language in a letter to the headteacher requesting a pond on the school grounds. By Year 6, most pupils are mature and creative writers, for example when writing a highly imaginatively diary entry as if they were staying at Hogwarts. Most plan their writing effectively using a variety of highly effective range of strategies to improve their work. Throughout the school, nearly all pupils write in legible handwriting and present their work neatly.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in their spoken Welsh as part of class routines. They ask and respond to simple questions successfully following basic patterns, for example when talking about themselves, describing the weather and discussing topic work. In Year 2, most pupils discuss their favourite food confidently by eliciting relevant information from a bar graph. In key stage 2,

most pupils respond appropriately to familiar questions, read short texts accurately and write fairly confidently using familiar vocabulary and sentence patterns, for example a fact file about Gareth Bale. However, pupils that are more able do not always make as much progress as they could in developing their Welsh skills further.

Nearly all pupils make very good progress in developing their numeracy skills and apply their skills confidently in engaging activities. For example, in the foundation phase, most pupils handle money confidently when buying superhero figures. By the end of Year 2, nearly all pupils have a very good knowledge of basic number facts and use these well to solve simple problems effectively. In key stage 2, most pupils develop their own strategies for solving number problems confidently and present information and findings systematically. Nearly all pupils apply their numeracy skills extremely confidently across the curriculum. Most pupils identify and draw angles correctly and apply their measuring skills accurately, for example when designing a Tudor house. By Year 6, nearly all pupils use an extensive range of written methods to elicit relevant information from the 1851 census in the Rhondda Valley. They collect and record data carefully and converse information systematically into a line graphs and pie charts.

Nearly all pupils develop very effective information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase develop good independent skills and can use electronic tablets very confidently, for example, to find information about why we wear daffodils on St David's Day. Most pupils in key stage 2 use ICT successfully to present information in a variety of interesting ways, such as videos, web pages and presentation packages. By Year 6, most pupils have excellent ICT skills. For example, they develop their modelling skills to a very high standard when creating their own databases from a survey of alien creatures.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Across the school, nearly all pupils show enjoyment and exceptionally positive attitudes to their learning. They are highly confident in tackling both independent and collaborative challenges and demonstrate sustained levels of motivation and interest in their work. Nearly all pupils are proud of their work. This is reflected in the extremely high standard of presentation in their books. Within lessons, they work highly effectively and show willingness to persevere at length with their tasks.

Nearly all pupils across the school display very high levels of wellbeing. A strong feature of the school is the care and respect that pupils show each other, adults and visitors. Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well in class and around the school. They know where to turn if they need support and are very confident that staff will listen and deal appropriately with any concerns. All members of the 'Worry Warriors' group monitor and support all pupils highly effectively to ensure that they feel happy and safe in school.

Nearly all pupils display very confident attitudes towards eating and drinking healthily and have a good awareness of the effect this has on their body. For example, all members of the Healthy Eating Club monitor the contents of pupils' lunchboxes regularly to raise awareness of balanced and healthy diets. Most pupils take part enthusiastically in sporting activities such as the daily mile and swimming lessons. As a result, nearly all pupils are extremely aware of the importance of healthy living.

Nearly all pupils are very enthusiastic about taking on various responsibilities in school. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 have specific responsibilities as members of different fora such as the 'attendance advocates' and 'rights respecting' groups. They fulfil their roles conscientiously and with clear commitment. Nearly all members of these school groups talk confidently about their roles and the effect they have on school life. For example, pupils in the 'digital leaders' club lead assemblies and communicate with their peers and parents very effectively about the importance of keeping safe on line. As a result, nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep safe online by discussing the importance of strong passwords and the dangers of pop-ups.

Nearly all pupils actively seek the opinions of their peers about a wide range of issues with a view to making improvements. For example, after discussing with their peers, pupils planted wildflowers on the school grounds to attract butterflies and bees. Nearly all pupils understand how to represent the views of other pupils. They show noticeable pride in their contribution to school life and the local community.

Nearly all pupils develop their skills extensively as they take an active part in their own learning. For example, they are involved in planning their work and topics. They also evaluate their lessons regularly and as a result, show very high levels of interest and engagement in their work. Most pupils have a good understanding of what they do well and what they need to do to improve their work by using different strategies very effectively. They understand that failure leads to success if they persevere and learn from their mistakes. As a result, nearly all pupils make exceptional progress.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Teachers and support staff have very high expectations of all pupils and provide them with outstanding classroom organisation and routines. Teaching and support staff have a positive and productive working relationship with pupils that contributes extensively to their positive learning experiences.

Teachers create a calm and purposeful working environment and manage pupils' behaviour highly effectively. They challenge all pupils skilfully by providing them with innovative and engaging activities. Nearly all teachers share learning experiences with pupils consistently well and set a brisk pace to the lessons. They use questioning effectively to encourage pupils to explain their thinking and to develop their learning further. As a result, nearly all pupils contribute and participate enthusiastically and maturely in tasks. Teachers encourage all pupils to embrace resilience when making a mistake in an inclusive and supportive learning environment. The way staff encourage pupils to learn from their mistakes is a notable strength throughout the school.

Another particular strength is the extensive opportunities the school provides for pupils to influence the content and context of their learning. In the foundation phase, pupils share their ideas enthusiastically and teachers develop these effectively into stimulating independent activities. In key stage 2, pupils contribute imaginatively to their own learning by reflecting and evaluating weekly activities. Teachers develop pupils' ideas effectively and encourage them to engage in a variety of enriched tasks. As a result, nearly all pupils participate enthusiastically in activities and develop their skills systematically.

All teachers use assessment strategies successfully so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they can do to improve. Nearly all pupils are very confident to act on their targets and make progress in their own learning. Self and peer assessment are highly effective throughout the school. Teachers provide pupils with effective feedback, which helps nearly all of them understand what they need to do in order to make progress that is well above the expectation.

In all classes, teachers provide pupils with extremely purposeful and highly relevant learning experiences within a broad and balanced curriculum. They plan activities carefully and use physical resources highly effectively as to enhance and support creative learning. As a result, staff adapt lessons very effectively to meet pupils' needs and interests.

In the foundation phase, teachers ensure that pupils have extensive and high quality opportunities to learn from practical 'hands on' experiences. They plan a very good balance between adult-led and independent activities. Teachers adapt these activities carefully to ensure that all pupils can access these, for example, by providing sound buttons to help pupils listen to instructions during independent tasks. In key stage 2, teachers develop pupils' skills further by providing them with a variety of interesting and highly engaging activities. They provide effective resources, including technology, to aid all pupils' learning successfully.

Across the school, staff plan thoroughly to ensure that pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills systematically within lessons and across the curriculum. They plan stimulating topics and experiences which provide excellent opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in new and engaging contexts. For example, pupils enjoy writing blogs and developing interview questions for a rock band that they have created themselves.

The school places an excellent emphasis on developing pupils' awareness of Welsh culture and heritage. Most staff use Welsh confidently throughout the day. As a result, nearly all pupils are very proud of their heritage and enthusiastic about speaking Welsh. However, teachers do not consistently ensure that the most able pupils have enough challenging opportunities to extend their Welsh skills further.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is a welcoming and an inclusive community. All staff provide pupils with effective care and support, which contributes exceptionally well to ensuring that they are all happy in school.

The school has very effective systems to track and monitor pupils' progress. Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well and provide them with highly effective support which meet their needs successfully. The provision for pupils with additional learning needs is extensive and extremely effective. Staff hold regular and rigorous meetings where teachers highlight pupils' progress and arrange interventions and support for them effectively. Nearly all teachers and support staff provide very high quality support to cater for the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Staff support all pupils successfully in an inclusive learning environment. As a result, nearly all pupils with additional learning needs make substantial progress in meeting their targets.

A strong feature of the school's work is the support it provides pupils to improve their wellbeing. Teachers and support staff respond very effectively to the needs of vulnerable groups and plan highly effective programmes of support and interventions to help them develop in specific areas. Their work and support for pupils and partners is exemplary. As a result, nearly all pupils have positive attitudes for their own learning and develop effectively as independent learners.

Leaders and staff communicate successfully with parents and the wider community, and inform them regularly about the wide range of varied activities that are taking place. The school and eco council seek the views of parents and the community through questionnaires. In turn, they consider the responses and implement many good suggestions successfully. Teachers provide parents with comprehensive and relevant information on how to support their children with their work at home. They invite parents to school regularly, for example, to contribute to a creative problem solving activity where pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills effectively. These sessions have a significant effect on pupils' progress.

The school has effective arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking and provides pupils with worthwhile opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe and live a healthy lifestyle. For example, the school provides a wide variety of clubs where pupils can take part in regular exercise such as circuit training and sports clubs.

Staff ensure that pupils are highly involved in making decisions about school life. For example, pupils run the weekly fruit and veg co-op and hold a variety of health and safety checks around the school. The school council is actively involved in all decision areas including fundraising and spending priorities. They present targets, updates and projects effectively to the governing body every term. These initiatives are well established, have a significant effect on pupils' positive attitudes, and have often influenced the school's priorities over time.

The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to engage in cultural and creative activities. For example, the school choir sang with the local male voice choir for the 50th anniversary commemoration service of the Aberfan disaster. Staff celebrate the arts successfully by providing pupils with a wide range of engaging activities. Pupil's art work is generally of a very high standard and is displayed creatively around the school.

Through effective collective worship and various class activities, the school provides pupils with very strong opportunities to develop their understanding of a range of social skills, moral issues, and spiritual awareness. Staff place a strong emphasis on the rights of the child and promote them successfully through daily routines. The school has very effective international links which enhance pupils' understanding of different traditions and cultures of other countries successfully.

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

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher is enthusiastic and has exceptionally high standards for herself, her staff and pupils. She collaborates very effectively with the dedicated staff and governors to ensure that all members of the school community share a common

vision of continually improving the school. As a result, staff focus very well on providing pupils with the opportunities to ensure the best possible outcomes for them.

The school has a rigorous and robust process of evaluating its strengths and identifying key areas to improve. They are firmly embedded in strategic planning and are an integral part of the school's sustained routines. Staff, governors and pupils are all actively involved in gathering evidence for this process and in suggesting how improvements can be made to make effective progress. This gives leaders a detailed picture of the school's activities from a wide variety of perspectives. As a result, they consistently focus on the correct areas to improve and plan changes very effectively. For example, staff have developed the opportunities for pupils to further extend their creative writing. As a result, nearly all pupils have made very strong progress. Leaders have an excellent understanding of what high standards look like and they prioritise plans and strategies strategically to ensure that nearly all pupils make sound progress.

Leaders at all levels take full responsibility for improving their specialist areas. They use the well-established and extensive monitoring systems very effectively to ensure that staff implement any proposed changes consistently. As a result, the school has an impressive track record in identifying and making improvements which are highly effective in improving outcomes for pupils. For example, the school identified pupils' independent learning as an area for improvement. Due to systematic and creative action, this is now a strength of classroom practice and pupils have highly developed independent skills across the school.

There is an exemplary culture and ethos throughout the school which supports and promotes professional learning. Professional development is extensive, monitored for impact and sustained. Leaders use every opportunity to share expertise and best practice. The school works particularly well with other providers to extend professional learning. An excellent example is its sustained collaboration with another local school where teachers from the same year group regularly meet to observe lessons and monitor pupils work. As a result, staff develop their skills exceptionally well.

An excellent feature is the way the governing body provides constructive support, challenge and valuable professional expertise for the school. Governors have an exceptional understanding of the school's performance, guidance and finances. They visit the school regularly and support both pupils and teachers to monitor and focus on the school's priorities and progress. They receive exemplary reports from the headteacher about the development and progress of the schools' plans for improvement. They know the school exceptionally well and their strategic input into all areas of school life is highly effective. Another innovative practice of the governing body's work is that it has established a forum for governing bodies from other local schools to share and work collaboratively on good practice.

The school has a very good range of resources, and leaders manage the school's finances very well. Spending plans link effectively to the school's priorities and leaders monitor the impact consistently. As a result, the school makes effective use of the pupil development grant to promote the learning and well-being of vulnerable pupils very successfully.

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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