



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

A report on

Capcoch Primary School

**School Street
Abercwmboi
Aberdare
RCT
CF44 6AD**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

About Capcoch Primary School

Name of provider	Capcoch Primary School
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	166
Pupils of statutory school age	119
Number in nursery classes	27
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 21.3%)	31.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 22.2%)	30.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2009
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	26/02/2013
Start date of inspection	27/06/2022

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Most Capcoch Primary School pupils make strong progress in their learning and develop as motivated, caring and enthusiastic learners. They enjoy learning in a safe and caring environment and appreciate the many opportunities they have to influence what they learn. Leaders and staff work hard to ensure that pupils feel valued, and their well-being is a school priority. Pupils appreciate the nurturing and supportive environment, and this is evident across the school.

The school has a strong team ethos where all staff work collaboratively on improvement priorities. Staff are developing the Curriculum for Wales successfully and, in general, provide beneficial and practical learning experiences. Nearly all pupils learn enthusiastically, and many engage in more independent and challenging activities. In the best examples, staff provide activities that support pupils to make systematic progress in developing their skills.

The headteacher and governors provide caring, sensitive and supportive leadership. This has been particularly important during the pandemic, where the absence of staff and senior leaders has been significant. Leaders are very positive role models and ensure that the core focus of the school is pupils well-being and progress in learning. School improvement processes are effective in identifying the strengths and areas for development. Governors are an important members of the school community and provide valuable support to staff and senior leaders.

Recommendations

- R1 To continue to ensure that skills are refined and developed to ensure all learners make progress with their skills.
- R2 Develop and share effective foundation phase principles and pedagogy to meet the needs of younger pupils

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning during their time at the school. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make strong progress through the school's care and support. Since the return of pupils following the pandemic, most make sound progress in consolidating and building on their literacy, numeracy and their digital skills.

A few pupils start nursery with skills below those expected for their age. Most pupils in nursery and reception develop their communication skills well and listen exceptionally well to adults and each other. They improve their vocabulary quickly and talk with confidence to adults and each other. Many older pupils speak clearly and confidently for a range of purposes, for example by providing clear explanations and lively presentations.

Many pupils' reading skills are developing well. The youngest pupils use an appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words. By Year 2, they use their reading skills confidently and they are aware that the blurb shares information about the book they read. Many of the older pupils read accurately with good expression and fluency, and make relevant inference of various texts. They discuss the plot of books and make accurate deductions about what may happen next. Most older pupils develop their higher-order reading skills purposefully to gather information quickly from different sources, for example when finding information to deepen their understanding of the Aberfan disaster.

Most pupils' early writing skills are developing well. By Year 2, many write in an appropriate range of contexts for different audiences, for example by using good phonetic knowledge to prepare a newspaper article on the Queen's Jubilee celebrations. Many older pupils build on their writing skills successfully. They show a secure grasp of familiar spelling patterns, paragraphing, and punctuation. As pupils move through the school, many pupils adapt their style and structure to different genres effectively and produce a wide range of writing pieces for different purposes and audiences. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils write a formal letter using persuasive, emotive and expressive language to stop businesses building on land designated to protect wildlife.

In the school's youngest years, most pupils make good progress in their mathematical development. In the nursery class, they begin to understand numbers up to ten, for example when buying ice creams in the role play area. By the end of Year 2, most measure length using non-standard and standard measures appropriately. Across the schools, most pupils apply their numeracy skills to the same standard in all areas of learning. Older pupils draw scatter and line graphs effectively when comparing the heart recovery rate to the height of the pupils and draw accurate conclusions. By Year 6, many pupils collate and analyse data when comparing peers' height to heart recovery rates.

Over the course of the pandemic, at home and in school, most pupils developed their digital skills well. They apply these skills in a range of creative contexts to support

their wider learning. For example, nursery pupils use tablet devices to design Divali Diyas as part of a topic. Many older pupils identify the most cost-effective way to plan an end of term party using spreadsheets. Most pupils use information technology and communication effectively to present and redraft extended pieces of writing in literacy sessions.

Most pupils' Welsh language skills has been limited by missed learning opportunities arising from the pandemic. Younger pupils use simple greetings and phrases whilst helping staff to collate school dinner numbers. Older pupils use developed language patterns to communicate simple information about what sort of television programmes they enjoy and provide a valid reason for their choice. Many pupils benefit from adults using Welsh frequently as part of their lesson delivery.

Nearly all pupils' physical skills are developing through a variety of experiences and activities. The youngest pupils apply themselves enthusiastically when using wet sand to build a new castle for the queen. The older pupils develop their physical skills by taking part in a variety of sports activities or as part of their learning, for example when undertaking a task of moving water from one bucket to another as part of an investigation on volume.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong and conducive to their good learning and sound well-being. Nearly all pupils show pride in their school and feel safe within its inclusive and caring ethos. They feel that adults in the school listen to their views very effectively and take them in to account when considering decisions that affect them. Most pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they are very courteous and welcoming to adults and visitors. Most pupils show care and consideration for each other and collaborate effectively and show respect for the contributions of other pupils.

Most pupils are developing well as capable and aspirational learners. They have a positive attitude towards learning, show strong interest in their work and talk confidently and enthusiastically about school life. Most pupils listen attentively to teachers' instructions and concentrate well on their work during lessons. They collaborate successfully in groups and pairs, and many make positive contributions to class discussion. Most demonstrate a high level of respect for the contributions of others.

Most pupils show good resilience when faced with problems. They react beneficially to the feedback they get from their peers and adults and use this to help them make valuable improvements. Most pupils are aware of their individual strengths and areas for development, for example, when older pupils set targets to improve their own learning. They reflect on their performance in their individual journals to inform their longer-term targets for improvement.

Nearly all pupils participate in decision making about their learning experiences. They express highly creative opinions when offering ideas that are integrated effectively into the school's 'magic moments' curriculum. Individual pupils' initial ideas are highlighted when activities are undertaken, which impacts powerfully on pupils' well-being and self-worth.

Pupils take an active part in the life of the school by taking on beneficial leadership roles through a range of pupil groups. They fulfil their responsibilities skilfully and conscientiously. These groups feed into the school Senedd that input positively into areas such as school curriculum development, healthy lifestyles and improving school resources. For example, the eco warriors worked with Keep Wales Tidy and Tidy Teams to develop outdoor provision successfully.

Most pupils state that staff support them how follow a healthy lifestyle effectively. They explain why it is beneficial to eat fruit during play times and why it is not sensible to drink sugary drinks. Members of the healthy school's council promote healthy eating by monitoring the contents of lunchboxes regularly and encourage their peers to make sensible choices by rewarding them with certificates. Many pupils have a comprehensive understanding of the need to be careful when using the internet and know what to do if they have any concerns.

Nearly all pupils appreciate the valuable opportunities for exercise and outdoor experiences at school. Most pupils take part in daily activities and benefit from a wide range of effective extra-curricular activities that promote their physical well-being and social development effectively, such netball, singing and cooking clubs.

Nearly all pupils care for each other and show compassion for others successfully, for instance through organising charity events such as 'dress to impress' that supports children's mental health. A range of pupil groups also lead projects and assemblies effectively to enhance important messages such as equality and sustainability, for example when celebrating Fairtrade Fortnight.

Most pupils are becoming ethically informed citizens, and many speak comprehensively about their rights as children. Worthwhile links with Toma Butta Primary School in Uganda allow pupils to share life experiences. This increases pupils' awareness of the importance of their contributions to create a caring society.

Following the pandemic, inspectors are not reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. Instead, the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance will be reported on as part of inspection area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers create a stimulating, creative and practical curriculum that engages nearly all pupils' interest and ignites their imagination. They provide exciting learning experiences for pupils, which motivate and support them very successfully.

Staff work skilfully to ensure very strong working relationships with pupils. They encourage respect and courtesy, which leads to the supportive ethos that permeates the school. All staff manage pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school effectively and nearly all pupils are engaged and remain on task during lessons. As a result, nearly all pupils are respectful and caring, and support each other sensitively in their learning. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress and well-being.

Teachers have responded enthusiastically to the development of the Curriculum for Wales. Learning experiences enable pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and

understanding successfully across the curriculum. This has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to learning. By including pupil voice in planning learning activities, staff provide valuable opportunities for them to play an active part in guiding their learning. This ensures that most pupils build successfully on previous learning experiences and strengthens their commitment to their work.

The curriculum supports most pupils to make progress in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Teachers plan engaging activities, including theme weeks that focus on topics such as Black History Month. This supports pupils to develop a better understanding of the diverse nature of Wales and the wider world. The school's provision for personal and social education develops pupils' understanding of their own well-being and identity very successfully.

Teachers plan a range of imaginative activities, which helps to nurture pupils' independence effectively, for example when taking on the role of an aerospace engineer to build a lander for a moon landing. As a result, pupils have the confidence to participate independently and think for themselves. However, staff are in the process of further refining activities to support pupils to make systematic progress in developing their skills.

The school's provision promotes the Welsh language successfully and reinforces pupils' pride and enjoyment in their language and culture, for example while singing Welsh hymns and contemporary songs in the morning assembly. Many staff use basic Welsh purposefully in the classroom, for example to give day to day instructions to their pupils. The work of the Cwriw Cymraeg encourages the use of more social Welsh during playtime among pupils. Most pupils are aware of the advantages of being bilingual. As a result, most pupils are gaining confidence to speak Welsh in formal and informal activities.

In most classes, teachers use questioning well to move pupils' learning on and support understanding, according to the needs of pupils. Across the school, many teachers deliver lessons at an appropriate pace. However, on occasions, teachers of younger pupils spend too much time explaining activities whilst pupils wait to begin their work. They do not always exercise foundation phase principles consistently to support pupils to further develop as independent learners.

Teachers make highly effective use of assessment information to identify pupils' strengths and areas for development. Across the school, teachers use a range of feedback strategies purposefully. Staff provide pupils with verbal feedback that praises their efforts and explains to them what they have done well. Where feedback is most effective, it provides pupils with a clear understanding of their strengths and areas for development. The opportunities for pupils to assess and reflect on their own and their peers' performance are developing well.

Teachers deploy support staff thoughtfully to assist the development of pupils' skills and well-being. Staff are sensitive to pupils' needs, allowing them to explore and make mistakes before stepping in to offer support. There are regular pupil progress meetings that include leaders, class teachers and the ALN co-ordinator. These meetings discuss the progress of individual pupils and, if required, how provision can be adapted to support improvement.

Staff organise their classes as stimulating and enjoyable places where nearly all pupils learn productively. This is done through colourful and appealing displays, which are valuable and beneficial in supporting teaching and learning. The school grounds further enhance curriculum provision for games, physical education and the development of pupils' co-ordination skills. The school enriches its curriculum well with a range of visits and visitors to school. For example, the local bowls club came to the school to teach older pupils how to bowl.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a happy, caring community and its ethos is highly effective in helping pupils to develop their social and moral understanding. Staff know the pupils very well and respond positively to their emotional needs. Staff maintained very good contact with pupils and highly effective on-line well-being check ins also supported pupils' emotional health. Since pupils' return to school, staff have successfully prioritised the well-being of pupils and supported them thoughtfully. For example, they provide a beneficial period of emotional reflection, relaxing music and calming activities on pupils' arrival to school. This effectively prepares pupils for learning in a caring and supporting learning environment.

The provision for pupils identified as having ALN is very strong. The school's highly effective ALN co-ordinator, along with all staff, ensures that there is good identification, tracking and support for individual and groups of pupils. Comprehensive pupil progress reviews result in teachers having a deeper understanding of the needs of all pupils. The school works effectively with a range of specialist services to secure additional, timely resources to support pupils with a range of needs. These arrangements ensure that targeted pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities. This is a strength of the school.

The school provides valuable opportunities for all pupils to take part in making decisions about important aspects of school life. Teachers listen to pupils' highly creative ideas when planning learning experiences for the school's 'magic moments' curriculum. This helps to stimulate and engage pupils effectively and supports them to make sound progress.

Pupils, including those from different groups across the school, take on leadership roles as members on a variety of worthwhile groups. This broadens their understanding of the importance of active citizenship. Through the activity of the school Senedd, pupils have a significant influence on important decisions that affect them. For example, the Senedd decided that they would like a vegetable patch, to grow and eat their own vegetables. The vegetables grown were used in the pupils' school lunches.

Teachers and many pupil groups deliver acts of collective worship that effectively explore children's rights and make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The progressive and structured approach in personal and social lessons allows pupils to explore issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion in Wales and across the world successfully.

The school has a good range of opportunities, which helps pupils to develop an understanding of their Welsh heritage. The school effectively promotes Welsh

cultural aspects such as singing, recital and chairing of the bard as part of its Eisteddfod celebrations. School assemblies organised by the Criw Cymraeg, also contribute positively towards a strong Welsh ethos.

Staff enable pupils to make strong contributions to the life of their community and these experiences help them to respect and care for others. Many pupils gain beneficial experience of the world of work through visitors sharing their experiences. For example, pupils worked with a high street bank and students from initial teacher education to provide training on entrepreneurship. There are also valuable opportunities for pupils to undertake entrepreneurial projects during enterprise week where pupils create and sell items to the school community.

The school is the first school in Wales to receive the Child Poverty Action Group award. The award is recognition of the school's work to remove financial barriers to learning and poverty-related stigma to ensure that pupils can fully access the school curriculum successfully. Furthermore, the staff provides an innovative 'swap shop' clothing bank and food bank opportunities supported by local businesses. The school contributes highly effectively to the community, supporting pupils' sense of belonging to the school and local area.

There is a strong focus on helping pupils to keep themselves safe and healthy. They are advised how to make good healthy food choices and provided with beneficial opportunities to develop their physical skills. In addition, the school offers a range of opportunities to enrich many pupils' learning and well-being through a comprehensive offer of extra-curricular activities, such as rugby, football and dance club.

The school has effective strategies in place to promote good pupil attendance, including daily monitoring, regular communication with parents and follow-up work, supported by outside agencies. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

Leaders have a clear vision for the school based on nurturing pupils' well-being and supporting their learning. The headteacher's thoughtful and compassionate leadership through the pandemic has been reassuring for the whole school community. Leaders model professional values and behaviour to establish highly effective relationships with staff and pupils that contribute positively to the strong team ethos of the school. They ensure that well-being is a strong focus of the school, and that pupils and families are supported beneficially.

There is effective management of staff, systems, and processes, so that all feel well-informed and able to discharge their roles and responsibilities appropriately. Senior leaders communicate effectively to ensure that all staff are well-informed and engaged in the life of the school. Communication with parents about whole-school issues and class-specific activities is timely and comprehensive, ensuring that information is shared and dialogue with parents is consistent. The school website, newsletters and digital platforms are highly informative and often provide a useful vehicle for teachers to share information and to respond to parental feedback.

The school is very aware of the need to address national priorities in education. Leaders and staff innovate and trial new approaches to teaching and learning in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders ensure that pupils contribute positively to provision that in general provides engaging and practical learning experiences. However, leaders need to continue to refine and develop these experiences to support pupils' progress in skills.

Over time, leaders have embedded a positive culture that promotes and supports the professional learning and development of all staff. Professional learning is comprehensive and based on pupil needs, such as ensuring that all staff participate in training to support pupils' well-being. The performance management of staff is well co-ordinated and links to school improvement priorities. All staff and governors have completed training to ensure that provision for pupils identified as having an autistic condition is effective.

The school's governing body is knowledgeable and experienced. Governors keep up to date with national developments and improvement priorities through regular visits to school, presentations by staff to governors, listening to learners and looking at books for pupils' progress in skills. They are working to return to a full monitoring timetable following the pandemic. This provides a beneficial context for helping them to monitor the school's progress against its strategic priorities and supports them to provide challenge and support about the school's work.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances prudently, balancing short-term and longer-term needs appropriately and ensuring that spending on the pupils is prioritised. The school uses grant funding effectively, including the pupil development grant, to ensure beneficial support for pupils. Leaders and teachers track individuals and groups carefully to ensure that support programmes, funded by grants, help pupils to make strong progress. They involve parents and pupils in generating ideas and making decisions about how best to prioritise the allocation of funds, for example to enhance the learning environment.

Governors ensure that the school has robust safeguarding arrangements in place, and that there are suitable policies and procedures to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and recognise clearly how the pandemic impacted on the school and wider community.

The school has developed suitable improvement processes that involve all staff and a wide range of partners, including pupils and parents. Leaders identify the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement, such as the need to develop pupils' oracy and writing skills. The school development plan has clear success criteria and timescales and involves governors and pupils in the process. The impact of pupils in the strategic direction of the school is developing well, and all pupil groups have a development plan to guide their activities. Pupils are incredibly proud of their school and their role in school life.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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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