



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

A report on

Garth Primary School

**Mission Road
Garth
Maesteg
Bridgend
CF34 0ND**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

About Garth Primary School

Name of provider	Garth Primary School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	219
Pupils of statutory school age	161
Number in nursery classes	36
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 23.0%)	42.1%
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 16.1%)	4.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	06/03/2023

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

Garth Primary School is a happy and caring learning community. Leaders, staff and governors work diligently to ensure that pupils' well-being sits at the heart of their work. The school understands and works with its local community beneficially. As a result, the school, its pupils and their families work together confidently and purposefully. Pupils develop positive working relationships with staff and trust them to help and support them at all times.

The school's developing curriculum, and an engaging range of extra-curricular activities and clubs, ensure that pupils enjoy school and take part positively in all the school has to offer. For the most part, teachers challenge pupils effectively and plan learning that supports them to make useful progress in many areas of learning. Many pupils make particularly positive progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Leaders and staff continue to work to develop learning experiences that ensure that pupils develop their skills and understanding progressively.

There is a strong sense of teamwork at the school, and the headteacher, senior leaders and staff work together positively. Leaders set in place positive strategies to improve pupils' skills and support their well-being. Their decision to fund family engagement officers is having a notably positive impact on pupils, their families and the local community.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the well-being issue identified at the time of the inspection
- R2 Ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to develop skills systematically and progressively
- R3 Sharpen monitoring and improvement strategies to focus better on pupils' learning
- R4 Improve pupils' writing skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

As many as half of pupils join the school with skills below that expected for their age and stage of development, particularly their oracy skills. As they progress through the school they make strong progress in many areas of learning, and particularly with their speaking and listening. However, pupil progress in the development of their writing skills is not as strong, and the development of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills is inconsistent. The progress of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with that of their peers. Pupils with additional learning needs make suitable progress against their individual targets and goals.

In nursery, about half of pupils begin school with weak oracy skills, but many make quick progress. They retell stories with good detail, explain what they are doing when learning and share their likes and dislikes confidently. They contribute to small group role-play activities happily, for example acting out their class story about animals enthusiastically. By Year 2, many pupils speak suitably. They explain their ideas in useful detail, for example describing step-by-step how they are going to plant seeds. Many listen to others well, although a few lose focus easily. In Year 4, most pupils listen carefully to the teacher's explanations and instructions intently. By Year 6, most pupils are articulate and eager to talk to visitors and discuss their learning thoughtfully. Most pupils speak maturely, although a few still use a limited and simple vocabulary.

In nursery and reception, many pupils develop a useful understanding of letters and their sounds. Younger pupils recognise letters in their environment and know the associated sound well. For example, they identify a picture of a dinosaur and can sound out the 'd' confidently. In Year 2, many pupils have continued to develop these skills adequately and use them to sound out simple words accurately. However, by this stage of their development their reading skills are not strong. By Year 4 and Year 5, nearly all pupils read fluently, and have a sound understanding of the vocabulary in their chosen books. They use a range of strategies to decode unknown words confidently. By Year 6, many pupils read suitably fluently, and recall in useful detail the events and characters from texts they have read. They use their reading skills effectively to find helpful information when undertaking research. However, a few pupils still do not understand well enough words they can read aloud.

In reception, many pupils begin to write short words with support, for instance to complete a poster to explain why they should 'save the bees'. In Year 2, many pupils understand the different purposes for writing, and structure their work appropriately, for example when writing a story or letter. However, their pieces of writing are often short and not developed well. A majority do not spell well enough, including common words, and a minority do not form letters accurately. By Year 5 and Year 6, pupils write suitably for a variety of purposes, including poetry and recounts. Many understand how to structure different forms of writing beneficially. For example, they understand how to construct a balanced argument and the purpose of an introduction in non-fiction writing. A majority use a suitable vocabulary, although in a minority of cases they still use common words incorrectly. A minority do not use capital letters

properly, for example using them in the middle of sentences and not using them for names. They do not punctuate sentences accurately nor spell well enough.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills. Throughout the school, most pupils understand and respond appropriately to simple classroom instructions. The youngest pupils use simple phrases, such as 'bore da', and ask visitors who they are confidently. By Year 2, many pupils ask others questions and give simple information about themselves, such as their name, where they live and their age. In Year 6 many pupils share their likes and dislikes thoughtfully, often extending their sentences independently and giving reasons for their choices. They describe themselves in good detail, including what they are wearing. Across the school, many pupils use their Welsh skills readily, for instance when counting or in Year 6 when telling the time.

As they progress through the school most pupils develop secure number skills. In Year 1 pupils accurately apply their understanding of addition and subtraction of single digit numbers to find a combination that will open a lock. By Year 2, many pupils use their understanding of number and measurement to discuss estimates of length and height using mathematical language correctly. They recall and use basic multiplication tables appropriately. In Year 4 many pupils make sensible estimates of the amount of sugar in a range of drinks and independently calculate the difference between their estimate and the actual answer. By Year 6, many pupils have a broad range of effective number skills. They simplify fractions accurately, recognise prime numbers up to 100 and understand the correct order in which to complete different mathematical problems. However, across the school, pupils do not develop their broader mathematical skills well enough, for example data handling and shape.

In nursery and reception, pupils begin to develop their digital skills well. They use tablet computers competently to play games that support the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. By Year 2, many pupils use their digital skills to produce engaging posters, adding images effectively. However, many struggle to log-on independently and this limits their progress in sessions. In Year 5, most pupils have strong ICT skills. They create their own digital games, create and use simple databases, and film their peers using a green-screen technology. While many pupils in Year 6 use a good range of applications to present work in different forms, their ICT skills have not progressed noticeably since Year 5.

Across the school, many pupils develop a range of creative skills successfully. In reception, pupils use clay imaginatively to represent the life cycle of a bee. In Year 1, pupils build a 'cave of doom' in response to a text they are reading. Many Year 5 pupils are developing their musical skills competently, playing a tune accurately on the glockenspiel.

Many pupils develop their physical skills effectively across a range of activities. Younger pupils using pedal bikes confidently and perform dance moves to nursery rhymes. Older pupils take part in physically demanding activities, such as netball and judo, confidently and capably.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that can share any problems they may have with staff, who will address them promptly. Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and take part in lessons and learning enthusiastically. Pupils are proud of their school and welcome visitors happily. Many share their ideas independently and confidently, such as when talking about improvements to the school's outdoor environment and their keenness to take part in outdoor learning.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They recognise the need to eat a balanced diet and to stay hydrated, for instance explaining what foods and drink would make a healthy lunchbox. Most recognise well the importance of staying physically fit and the role that exercise can play in helping this. They take part readily in activities, such as yoga and the daily mile run, and talk knowledgeably about how this helps to keep their bodies fit. Most pupils have a useful understanding of the importance of staying safe when using the internet, including the importance of not sharing personal information on social media.

Many pupils take part in school groups enthusiastically. For example, the Pupil Parliament supports school leaders by helping plan charity events and monitoring pupil attendance. Pupils understand that their voice is important and express their ideas and views considerately. However, a few of the more recently established groups are too led by staff, and yet to have developed ideas for their work or to have an impact on school life.

At the beginning of sessions, most pupils are ready to learn. Nearly all move from task to task sensibly, and without fuss. They find and select their own resources sensibly and maturely. Most pupils work co-operatively in pairs and in small groups. They support and help each other beneficially, for example identifying information that others have missed when undertaking research.

Most pupils settle quickly and focus for a good amount of time. They avoid distractions well, for example continuing with their tasks while the teacher is explaining ideas to other groups. Many work well independently, and in many cases older pupils solve their own problems before asking staff. For example, pupils in Year 6 try a range of different ways of solving number problems when faced with difficult calculations.

Most pupils respond well to feedback from staff and from their peers. When they understand what changes they need to make to their work, they do so diligently and purposefully. However, a minority do not fully understand the school's different marking codes, or teachers' comments, and this hampers their ability to know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.

Each morning, too many pupils arrive at school late. This disrupts pupils' learning and the start of lessons.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum provides a broad range of engaging learning experiences that enthuse pupils effectively. For example, older pupils debate whether the moon

landings were real or fake, using research thoughtfully and asking questions reflectively. As leaders and staff continue to develop the curriculum, in line with the Curriculum for Wales, the school gives pupils a suitably broad range of learning experiences across the different areas of learning and experience. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of science, and areas of mathematics other than number, are still under-developed.

The school uses the United Nations' global goals as a focus for learning and this gives pupils a helpful understanding of international issues, such as the importance of sustainability and recycling. Pupils are beginning to have a suitable input into these topics, and what and how they learn, but at present this is still overly directed by staff in a majority of cases. Teachers consider carefully the skills that pupils develop through these themes and are beginning to monitor their coverage competently, including how pupils use skills such as literacy in all areas of learning. However, provision to ensure that pupils develop knowledge, skills and understanding progressively as they move from class to class is not effective enough. This means that learning does not always build on prior experiences well enough, and that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Pupils have purposeful opportunities to learn about the language and the country of Wales through interesting curriculum experiences and educational visits. Daily sessions help pupils to practise and develop their Welsh language skills beneficially, and visits, visitors and trips help them to understand the history and geography of the local area and Wales. For example, a visit from an ex-miner and a visit to a local mine supported pupils' understanding of how their local area grew and came to be as it is today.

Teachers use the school's forest area to support learning effectively. They plan an engaging range of experiences in the outdoors, for instance to allow pupils to learn about caring for living things and the environment. Teachers consider well how this learning can support pupils' well-being and skills, such as teamworking. These highly positive experiences have a positive impact on pupils' eagerness to learn and on the way that they engage with each other and with adults confidently.

Throughout the school, teachers work thoughtfully with pupils to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. This strong working relationship between staff and pupils creates an environment where pupils feel safe to make mistakes and to ask for help. In most lessons, teachers help pupils to understand the objectives for that session and what is required from them. Teachers' helpful modelling of 'what a good one looks like' establishes clear expectations and assists pupils' understanding of how to be successful in their tasks.

In many lessons, teachers are strong language role models and constantly reinforce the use of subject specific terminology to broaden pupils' vocabulary. They provide challenging activities that meet the needs of individual learners, and frequently place learning into a relevant, real-world context. This helps to engage pupils in their learning beneficially. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not provide learning activities that provide an appropriate level of challenge, explain tasks clearly or plan learning that pupils can understand at their stage of development. In these sessions, too many pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. In the younger

classes, teachers provide pupils with too narrow a range of activities in the outdoors and do not use these areas well enough to support pupils' development effectively.

Most teachers deploy learning support staff purposefully, and their work and high-quality feedback support pupils to make good progress. The quality of verbal feedback that teachers provide is strong, and this helps pupils to make beneficial changes to their work and supports them when they are unsure of what to do. However, teachers' written feedback is inconsistent in its quality and frequency, and does not always identify helpfully enough what pupils need to do to improve the quality of their learning.

Care, support and guidance

Staff and pupils work together positively and with respect. All staff ensure that pupils' well-being is a main priority, and understand and respond sensitively to their needs. This supportive ethos helps pupils to feel safe and cared for, and contributes notably to their positive attitude to school and to their well-being.

The school provides effective support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Teachers produce useful class profiles that identify helpfully how well pupils are making progress and who would benefit from extra support. They work closely with leaders to consider what type of support would be most beneficial. There are a good range of strategies, such as small group sessions led by learning support staff, to help improve pupils' skills in important areas, like speech and language. These have a positive impact on helping pupils make progress toward their individual goals.

The school has strong processes to help support pupils' well-being. These include a beneficial programme of nurture support groups that focus well on developing pupils' confidence and social skills. This helps to develop pupils' positive attitudes to school. The school works positively with external specialists, such as educational psychologists, to provide additional targeted support for a few pupils.

The school's family engagement officers make a highly positive contribution to the life and work of the school. They organise and run a wide range of initiatives that support pupils and their families effectively. They liaise with external suppliers to arrange donations to their food sharing initiative, and work with pupils to sell groceries and fruit to families in the local area. This has helped the school to develop strong, trusting relationships with those in the nearby community. The engagement officers make beneficial home visits, for example to pupils who will be starting in the nursery, and this helps to support families to integrate with the school positively. They run 'life skills' sessions with parents and liaise with the local college to organise help for parents to improve their understanding of numeracy. They work helpfully with the 'Friends of Garth' group, and this results in parents helping with school events and raising funds for the school. Overall, their work is highly beneficial to pupils, parents and the school.

The school provides purposeful opportunities for pupils to learn about the importance of equality and to begin to understand the diverse nature of the community around them. Pupils study important historical and modern role-models, such as black headteacher Betty Campbell. They consider their own and others' individual nature thoughtfully during 'Express Ourselves' day.

Leaders and staff are continuing to develop worthwhile opportunities for pupils to contribute to the life of the school as members of school groups, such as the eco-council. Staff support these groups and provide pupils with suitable opportunities to make decisions about how to improve their school. However, few of the newer groups have yet to begin to influence the life of the school.

The school has appropriate arrangements to support pupils to learn about the importance of healthy eating and drinking, and on-line safety. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to benefit from physical exercise, for example the daily mile, dance and judo clubs. These help pupils to improve their understanding of how to stay fit and remain healthy. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as yoga and board games club. These clubs help to develop pupils' thinking and social skills, and contribute positively to pupils' enjoyment of school.

In general, there is a suitable culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff understand well their role in most aspects of safeguarding pupils, including the importance of recording and reporting their concerns. However, leaders have not given enough consideration to ensuring that there are suitable policies and training to help staff understand procedures for physical restraint should the need arise.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads the school diligently and passionately. Working with the staff and leadership team, she has developed a clearly understood vision for the school that focuses on achieving high standards and driving change. Leaders have taken the thoughtful step of capturing their vision in a set of useful individual documents called 'What Matters in...', for example 'What matters in feedback' and 'What matters in monitoring and evaluating'. These documents have been developed and refined with the whole staff to ensure that everybody at the school understands the school's vision for these areas. This ensures that all staff understand leaders' expectations.

Leaders understand well the community in which the school sits, and work thoughtfully with parents and the local community to ensure that the school contributes constructively to the area, both educationally and socially. For instance, the school's community food shop helps to provide affordable food to local families and encourages pupils to understand the importance of living sustainably.

Leaders set high expectations of themselves and others at the school. They work thoughtfully to ensure that most staff are supported and challenged to do their best. Leaders set targets for staff performance that align well with the school's priorities, such as developing an effective curriculum in line with the Curriculum for Wales guidance. This helps to ensure that most teachers and support staff work effectively and contribute purposefully to whole-school development.

Governors have a strong understanding of the local community, and this helps them to guide school leaders in their work beneficially. They have a good understanding of how well the school operates and are particularly knowledgeable about the school's budget and how resources are spent. They ensure that resource is allocated towards identified priorities, such as improving the outdoor environment.

Governors have a suitable understanding of a majority of the school's development priorities, such as the need to improve pupils' attendance. However, their knowledge and understanding of priorities to improve pupils' learning are less strong. Their ability to challenge and support the school in this regard is hampered by the broad and general nature of the school's development priorities. Governors are fully aware of the importance of their role in ensuring healthy eating and drinking, and developing a culture of safeguarding at the school. They fulfil many of their responsibilities well. However, along with senior staff, they have not ensured that policies and practice linked with physical restraint are up to date.

Beginning with the 'What matters in monitoring' document, leaders have set in place a carefully organised timetable of activities throughout the year to evaluate the work of the school. A majority of self-evaluation activities are robust and identify well a range of strengths and areas for improvement. For example, they identify clearly when teachers do not give sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum. However, leaders' monitoring does not focus sharply enough on identifying and evaluating strengths and areas for improvement in pupils' learning and skills. This means that, while leaders are clear that there are areas that need improvement, such as pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, they cannot pinpoint well enough exactly what pupils need to do better. This means that while improvement strategies often bring about improvements, for example in strengthening pupils' speaking skills, they are frequently too broad and do not always focus clearly enough on what needs to be made better.

Leaders provide staff with relevant professional learning that is matched well with the school priorities and with national initiatives, such as the Curriculum for Wales. As a result, most staff have suitable opportunities to develop their professional understanding in line with improvement initiatives and curriculum developments. For example, whole staff training on improving pupils' oracy skills has helped many pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills beneficially.

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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