



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

**A report on**

**Trelai Primary School**

**Bishopston Road  
Caerau  
Cardiff  
CF5 5DY**

**Date of inspection: October 2023**

**by**

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

## About Trelai Primary School

Name of provider	Trelai Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	371
Pupils of statutory school age	292
Number in nursery classes	39
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%)	69.6%
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%)	15.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	14.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2015
Start date of inspection	09/10/2023

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](https://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

Trelai Primary School is a calm and happy place for pupils to learn and develop safely and successfully. School leaders, teachers and support staff know each child well and understand how to nurture individuals to get the best from them. Pupils are happy in school and, over time, they become confident to try new experiences and contribute fully to school life. Staff understand the community the school serves and recognise the challenges many families face. They offer pupils a broad range of interesting experiences that help them to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding and resilience that they will need to thrive in the outside world. This contributes to the good progress pupils make, often from very low starting points.

The headteacher and senior leaders form a strong team that drives improvement and expects commitment from others. To achieve this, members of the leadership team lead by example and offer effective support to staff, governors, pupils and families. The school's thorough approach to self-evaluation means that leaders and governors know the school's strengths and areas for development well. They have built a very good track record of improvement in recent years and brought about considerable change that has led to significant progress in many important areas. The school's current priorities for improvement are relevant, but they cover too many areas of its work, so it is sometimes challenging for staff to focus on what matters most.

Staff provide sensitive and purposeful support to pupils who need additional help. They track pupil progress well and this helps teachers to adapt their teaching to the needs of pupils. Teaching is strong overall, although provision to develop pupils' deeper understanding of mathematical concepts is less effective. Senior leaders work relentlessly alongside staff and families to improve attendance, but this area remains a challenge for the school.

## Recommendations

- R1 Secure the progressive development of pupils' mathematical understanding so that they can apply their numeracy skills confidently in variety of contexts
- R2 Sharpen the focus of school improvement priorities
- R3 Continue the school's rigorous work to increase attendance

## What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to its improvement journey.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Many pupils enter the school with skills and understanding at a stage of development well below those expected for their age. During their time in the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those who are eligible for free school meals or from low-income households, make good progress from their starting points. Pupils who start the school with English as an additional language make strong progress and, by the time they reach Year 6, nearly all achieve at least as well as their peers.

Most pupils listen attentively to adults and to one another. Most younger pupils talk respectfully to one other and ask sensible questions to support their learning. As they move through the school, many use new vocabulary confidently and precisely. Many pupils talk about their learning willingly and speak clearly when presenting to their peers. A majority of older pupils volunteer their opinions and provide explanations for their views.

The school's strong focus on improving reading means that most younger pupils grow to love books and are eager to show off their reading skills to others. Many develop a firm knowledge of letter sounds and use a range of suitable strategies to help them read unfamiliar words. By Year 2, many pupils describe the main events in a book, and a majority predict what might happen next in a story. A majority of older pupils use their reading skills well to support their work across the curriculum. Many read a variety of appropriately challenging texts independently, for instance to research relevant information for their class topic. They locate details in response to specific questions efficiently. A majority interpret pictures and words skilfully to come to plausible conclusions, drawing on the context of their texts and their prior knowledge to support their thinking.

Most pupils make good progress in their writing. Many in nursery and reception develop good pencil control and begin writing for a purpose, for instance by making marks to create shopping lists and birthday cards. Most pupils go on to develop suitable letter formation and to use their knowledge of letter sounds to write with increasing independence. By Year 3, most understand different types of writing that they read and discuss together as a class. This helps them to approach their own writing with greater confidence and to use relevant features appropriately in their work. Most older pupils write at length in a range of genres, but a minority do not punctuate their extended writing accurately or edit their work to make sure that it makes sense.

Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning the Welsh language and are proud to use simple Welsh around the school. Most respond enthusiastically during short, focused teaching sessions, especially when playing games and taking part in competitive language activities. Over time, many pupils build an appropriate vocabulary and a growing knowledge of sentence structures that helps them to ask and answer increasingly detailed questions about everyday topics.

A majority of pupils make effective progress in developing their mathematical knowledge and numeracy skills. For example, many young pupils establish an early knowledge of number order that enables them to count to 10 and backwards from 10 confidently and identify the missing number in a sequence correctly. Over time, many learn to use this knowledge to help them measure objects accurately and order them from the smallest to the largest. Many older pupils recall number facts and methods of calculation correctly. They use this information to support other aspects of their work, for instance to work out a simple fraction of a quantity. However, a minority of pupils do not understand mathematical concepts well enough to adapt and apply methods flexibly when faced with new or more complex problems.

Most pupils develop and use their digital skills appropriately to enhance their learning in a variety of worthwhile contexts. For example, younger pupils create pictograms to present the results of a survey they conduct in class. As they move through the school, most pupils use technology with growing confidence to bring together information from different sources to create engaging presentations that demonstrate their learning. Older pupils make effective use of online research to inform their spending decisions. For example, they use a spreadsheet to compare the costs of ingredients in different supermarkets when preparing to make a lasagne for parents.

Most pupils develop their creative skills in a range of practical activities that enrich their learning beneficially. For example, in Year 3 pupils enhance their understanding of volcanoes by making models and Year 4 pupils recall and copy simple rhythms when playing the ukelele. Most pupils focus well on these creative activities and develop high levels of concentration and perseverance. Pupils' physical skills progress well throughout the school. Younger pupils handle tools and equipment skilfully, for example when constructing dens and directing a flow of water when working with a group outdoors. They take measured risks confidently when climbing and balancing on apparatus. Many older pupils pass, catch and dribble a ball with control, showing good awareness of the space around them as they move.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Nearly all pupils build strong working relationships with staff and with one another. This helps to develop pupils' confidence and form positive attitudes toward school life and learning. Many enjoy school and feel safe and nurtured by their teachers and support staff. They feel that adults listen to their views and treat them fairly. Most pupils have an appropriate understanding of how to stay safe online. Older pupils, for instance, know how to identify secure, suitable websites and are aware of their digital footprints. Most know who to approach if something is worrying them and understand how they can share any problems they may have, either directly with an adult or through class worry boxes.

Most pupils know how to keep their bodies healthy. Nearly all are active at breaktimes and understand that walking to school is good for their physical health and well-being. They eat healthy snacks and lunches at school and appreciate the opportunity to drink water freely throughout the day to keep themselves hydrated. Learning how to grow fresh food in the school's garden with volunteers who are experienced allotment gardeners means that older pupils appreciate where food comes from. As they help in the garden, they develop a good understanding of why growing and eating a range of fruits and vegetables is good for their health.

Nearly all pupils show respect for others and are courteous. They respond well to the school's clear and consistent approach to developing positive relationships. This means that most behave well in lessons and around the school. On rare occasions, a very few pupils struggle to regulate their behaviour, and this has a disproportionate impact on the school's exclusion rates.

Many pupils persevere with their learning when they find it difficult and develop a suitable range of effective strategies to avoid distractions. Most are engaged in their activities and respond particularly well to practical experiences and simple rewards that encourage their participation. From an early age, many begin to take an interest in their progress through recording their own achievement points and contributing to their personalised Trelai Learning Journeys. Pupils learn from the positive play, language and attitudes that adults model to them on the playground. Most learn quickly about fair play, sharing and equality and understand that following routines and living up to the school's high expectations makes school a happy place to be.

Most pupils are tolerant and respectful towards others. They are particularly accepting of their peers with additional learning needs. Many work collaboratively and successfully in groups or pairs, respecting everyone's contributions appropriately. For example, younger pupils value feedback from supporting adults on how to improve letter formation, and older pupils are developing ways in which they can use feedback to move their learning forward.

Pupils value their school community and the opportunities they have to lead and be part of pupil groups that contribute purposefully to school life. For example, the Eco committee helps to lead school assemblies about topics linked to its work, and pupils from the Playground Buddies group take on roles as supportive friends at play times. This has a positive impact on pupil well-being in the yard. Across the school, most pupils are proud to have responsibilities. Many take pride in their school environment and are keen to promote this to other pupils. For example, the 'manager' of the construction area ensures that pupils accessing the provision treat the area respectfully. This increases the manager's self-worth and encourages a sense of responsibility towards the other pupils.

Despite the school's rigorous and relentless approach to absenteeism, attendance levels remain low.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Adults set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and establish clear and consistent routines that help pupils to feel settled and secure in class. They use praise and encouragement purposefully to build positive working relationships and create a calm, productive atmosphere that enables pupils to focus on their learning effectively. In most lessons, teachers share clear objectives for pupils' learning and give helpful explanations that support them to understand what they need to do to be successful. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils appropriately to assess their understanding. They give valuable verbal feedback to pupils during lessons that corrects misconceptions and identifies what pupils do well and how they can improve.

Teachers organise the learning environment in class and outdoors to meet the needs and reflect the interests of pupils effectively. Across the school, adults celebrate the progress pupils make on their learning journeys in working displays that capture their engagement and understanding clearly. Because of this, pupils feel a strong sense of responsibility for their learning that helps to motivate them. Teachers understand the skills and knowledge they need to plan for pupils to progress. They model appropriate language and build pupils' vocabulary well. This helps pupils to express what they have learned clearly. In a very few instances where teaching is less effective, teachers do not match learning experiences closely enough to pupils' current understanding. This means that, occasionally, pupils lose interest in their work and do not make enough progress.

Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to review their own and others' progress. They use a wide range of assessments to monitor progress over time thoroughly. In the younger classes, adults have recently modified their approach to planning, teaching and learning through play and exploration. As part of this work, staff use focused observations to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. Their observations enable them to adapt learning experiences skilfully to sustain pupils' interest and progress. This has a positive impact on pupil engagement and helps to address pupils' low level of skills on entry.

Staff collaborate effectively to design a bespoke curriculum that responds to the unique needs and interests of the pupils of Trelai Primary School. For example, teachers offer authentic activities that develop pupils' financial understanding, from the practical use of money in the class shop to managing spending and budgeting for a family meal. There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the diverse nature of the community in which they live and the wider world. Themes such as 'United We Stand', and a trip to the Senedd encourage older pupils to explore democracy and equality as they learn about local government and human rights. A rich and varied range of visits engages pupils well and enhances their learning. For example, as part of their topic on the Victorians, pupils' visit to a South Wales coal mine gave them first-hand experience of Wales' coal mining history.

Overall, the curriculum offers appropriate breadth and depth across the areas of learning. It is evolving to build systematically on pupils' existing skills, knowledge and understanding to secure progression as they move through the school. Curriculum plans are coherent, detailed and structured, but flexible enough for teachers to adapt to the changing interests of pupils or according to current affairs. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop a secure enough understanding of mathematical concepts for them to apply their mathematical skills confidently across the curriculum.

The school environment is rich in language. Alongside effective opportunities to develop pupils' English communication skills, most teachers model Welsh well. They use Welsh greetings and instructions regularly and this means that pupils see, hear and speak Welsh daily. There is a consistent approach to teaching Welsh across the school that enables pupils to develop sentence structures progressively. Pupils learn about the culture of Wales through song, dance, poetry and art.

Teachers encourage pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices, working with others to deliver topics such as eating a balanced diet, keeping active and the difficult, but relevant topic of knife crime. Teachers use the resources and expertise of staff in the High School to enrich and extend pupils' learning experiences. Purposeful visits and visitors help pupils learn about their locality, its businesses, services, heritage, and people. Particularly successful is the school's partnership with community members who work alongside pupils in the school's allotment. These experiences build pupils' personal and social skills and help bridge the generation gap. This promotes a sense of belonging and understanding of the diverse community in which they live.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The school places a strong focus on pupils' well-being and inclusion for all. Staff provide a nurturing environment where pupils feel valued and safe. This begins every day when staff welcome pupils and parents on the yard. In all classes, familiar routines and dedicated morning reflection time help to ensure a calm start to the day.

The excellent working relationships that staff build with pupils enable them to respond promptly and sensitively to pupils' emotional, social and behavioural needs. They use the school environment effectively to support pupils to improve their learning, manage their emotions and regulate their behaviour. Each class has an area where pupils can go to settle, and the extensive outdoor environment, including the games area and garden, offers pupils suitable spaces to be physically active or to relax. Creative provision and clear, consistent approaches to developing positive relationships have a positive impact on pupil behaviour. Specific strategies to support pupils with very challenging needs and at risk of exclusion work very well in nearly all cases.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is a strength. The school's close partnership with the neighbouring Flying Start setting means that staff often know individuals' needs very early on. This enables them to plan provision carefully and ensure a smooth transition into nursery. For pupils whose needs emerge later, teachers and leaders identify their needs swiftly and provide for them effectively. As pupils move through the school, regular progress meetings focus well on their development in relation to their starting points and individual plans. The school has recently adapted its approach to offer the majority of support within classrooms so that pupils do not miss out on other learning. To complement this approach, skilful support staff lead specific interventions for individuals or small groups of pupils. Where appropriate, specialists from outside agencies offer beneficial experiences that are tailored to individual needs, such as play therapy and music therapy.

Staff provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to become active citizens and develop their awareness of important social issues, including racism and anti-bullying. This helps pupils to welcome groups of pupils such as refugees who arrive in the school from time to time. Becoming 'community heroes' and taking part in activities such as organised litter-picking in the locality encourages pupils to develop empathy and shows them that they can help others in all sorts of ways.

There are good opportunities for pupils to engage with sport and the arts, often supported financially by the school to ensure that no-one misses out. For example, various sporting clubs develop pupils' fitness levels, while board games and craft

clubs provide opportunities to problem-solve, work collaboratively and be creative. An effective partnership with an external music provider ensures that all older pupils can learn to play a musical instrument. The school provides opportunities for pupils to participate in performances and events that develop their confidence and self-expression. They visit the theatre to watch productions and older pupils engage in film making and use special effects make-up as part of their Lights, Camera, Action topic. Individual Learning Journeys are a highly effective way of helping pupils to reflect on their learning and track their physical and creative progress over time.

The school enriches pupils' spiritual, moral and social development appropriately. Pupils have daily opportunities for reflection, members of the local church often visit assembly, and children learn about other faiths in their lessons. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of equality and diversity and to consider the views of others sensitively.

The school has a rigorous and relentless approach to improving pupils' attendance. Led by a senior leader, and working closely with parents, staff use a comprehensive range of strategies to promote and offer incentives for good attendance. They have effective partnerships with external agencies that support the school's work in this area. The school's work to improve parental engagement, including initiatives such as 'stay and play' sessions, focuses on building trusting relationships with families. This has led to a few parents accessing courses at a local college to further their own education and achieve qualifications. In these instances, parents' attitude to school and learning has a positive impact on their children's learning and attendance.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding, and all staff understand their roles in keeping pupils safe.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has developed a strong leadership team. Together, they have established a clear vision that aims to provide all pupils with the skills they need to have the best chance of success in life. Leaders share a common purpose to secure pupils' well-being and prioritise their educational progress to prepare them for the outside world. Leaders have high expectations of themselves and staff. They inspire commitment from others, and this has enabled them to build a collaborative team of staff, plan for the future and achieve success. The school's aim 'we work hard, we act responsibly, we are respectful' is at the heart of everything leaders, staff, pupils and governors do. This approach has helped to bring about a calm, consistent and productive working atmosphere in the school, which has had an immensely positive effect on the lives of pupils and their families.

Staff understand and fulfil their roles and responsibilities conscientiously. Leaders encourage all teachers and support staff to share their views and contribute to decision-making. This helps staff to feel valued and to know that they are an important part of whole-school developments. A good example of this is the work that has been done to recognise that building mutual respect between staff and parents is everyone's responsibility. All staff have embraced this approach and have developed a thorough understanding of the needs of their pupils, their families and of the community the school serves.

The headteacher and governing body finance committee monitor the school's budget closely. They prioritise the needs of the pupils and aspects of school improvement that will support those needs most effectively. This includes spending on staffing to provide much needed additional support for pupils, and funding activities that pupils may not otherwise experience, including instrumental music lessons and activity weeks. The school uses its pupil development grant effectively to support a range of strategies to engage pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households and accelerate their progress. The school monitors the impact of these provisions carefully to ensure value for money.

Governors understand their role in setting, supporting and evaluating the school's strategic direction. They bring a wide range of skills to the school and provide appropriate challenge to school leaders in relation to much of the school's work. For example, they ask questions about the developing curriculum to ensure that it meets the need of pupils and check that the school has appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking. Governors have a good grasp of school self-evaluation overall, through listening to informative presentations from staff and visiting the school to see improvements first-hand. They trust senior leaders' decisions about school improvement but are not directly involved in setting school priorities.

The school has a very good track record of making improvements in recent years, for example in relation to pupil behaviour and attitudes to learning, developing consistent approaches to reading and developing the trust and engagement of parents and families. The school has established thorough processes to evaluate its work and plan for improvement. All staff contribute effectively to self-evaluation. They provide leaders with termly reports about the progress of elements of school improvement that are relevant to their classes or areas of expertise. This helps staff to understand that they are accountable for their pupils' progress and play a vital role in school improvement. However, the school's current priorities cover too many areas and are not precise enough. This makes it difficult for staff to focus clearly on a few important areas for improvement and to evaluate the difference that specific actions make on pupil outcomes.

All staff take responsibility for and show considerable commitment to their own professional learning. Senior leaders support staff effectively through performance management and providing valuable learning opportunities related to school improvement priorities and personal interests. Much of the school's professional learning is based on high-quality collaboration between staff within the school and across schools. Staff often use coaching and modelling methods with colleagues to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. A good example of this is the way in which foundation staff have introduced and are evaluating a new approach to curriculum planning. The focus of professional learning recently has been designing a relevant curriculum for the pupils of Trelai. Taking responsibility for aspects of the curriculum has encouraged all staff to expand their leadership skills. In addition, school leaders give staff plenty of opportunities to enhance their careers, for example by moving to different year groups or taking new responsibilities. This enables teachers and support staff to discover new talents and areas of interest and keeps them motivated in their work.

## 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](http://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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