



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

**A report on**

**Gelli Primary School**

**Ystrad Road  
Ystrad  
Pentre  
RCT  
CF41 7PX**

**Date of inspection: October 2023**

**by**

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

## About Gelli Primary School

Name of provider	Gelli 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	199
Pupils of statutory school age	156
Number in nursery classes	25
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%)	23.9%
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%)	3.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	15/03/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	15/03/2016
Start date of inspection	23/10/2023

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

Gelli Primary School is a nurturing place for pupils, staff and visitors. All pupils and their families receive a warm welcome. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud to be a part of such a reassuring learning environment. Teachers and support staff are always there to help when needed. The headteacher, teachers and support staff take extremely good care of the pupils and want them to thrive in learning and in life.

The headteacher provides strong and compassionate leadership and knows the school well. She is ably supported by the deputy headteachers and all staff. Staff and senior leaders trust each other to form an effective, successful team. The team work purposefully alongside the governing body to secure improvements for the school. Together, they understand school strengths and areas for development and plan appropriate strategic actions to secure improvement.

Pupils know that staff expect them to behave well and respect everyone in the school and the community. Nearly all pupils behave well and participate enthusiastically in opportunities to improve aspects of the school.

Staff offer pupils a variety of school experiences, all of which help to keep pupils interested and make learning exciting. As a result, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, engage well in their learning, make good progress and achieve well. The engagement of pupils in their learning, and their excellent behaviour, are notable strengths of the school. However, in a few instances teachers do not monitor pupils' progress and address any uncertainties of what to do quickly enough.

The school's curriculum takes account of pupils' interests. Teachers and support staff are skilful and support pupils to develop a range of skills across the curriculum well. However, provision to develop pupils' writing is less well developed.

The school places strong emphasis on supporting the well-being of all. Leaders and staff adopt a beneficial community focused approach, providing a range of support for individual pupils and their families. Provision for pupils with ALN is comprehensive and leaders ensure that provision is suitably adapted to meet pupils' needs. There is a strong culture of safeguarding.

## Recommendations

- R1 Share the effective practice that exists within the school to improve the consistency of provision overall
- R2 Improve the provision for pupils to write at length and improve the quality of their writing

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

A majority of pupils begin school with levels of understanding and skills at or above those expected for their age. During their time in school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those affected by socio-economic disadvantage, make effective progress from their individual starting points.

Most pupils are confident speakers and attentive listeners. Many younger pupils communicate their ideas clearly to adults and each other. For example, when painting a still life of flowers, they discuss the colours they use. As they progress through the school, most pupils' language skills develop effectively. Nearly all older pupils speak articulately, for example when presenting a news report to the class using green screen technology.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills. Younger pupils develop their knowledge of letters and sounds well. As they move through the school, pupils use strategies successfully to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils develop their fluency and begin to use intonation. By the time they are in Year 6, many pupils are fluent, enthusiastic readers. They discuss their favourite authors and a few identify their preferred genres, giving reasons for their choices.

Across the school, many pupils develop their writing skills appropriately. The youngest pupils develop their writing skills well. They know that words have meaning and make marks using a variety of writing tools. A few pupils form legible letters and numbers independently. As they progress, pupils develop their spelling, punctuation and handwriting appropriately. However, too many pupils do not present their work with care. By the time they are in the oldest year groups, pupils make use of authorial techniques and phrases including personification to add interest when writing journals. Although they are beginning to amend their writing to make improvements, generally pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write at length or to improve the quality of their writing. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of.

Most pupils develop secure mathematical knowledge and numeracy skills as they progress through the school. A majority of pupils apply these skills competently in their learning across the curriculum. Younger pupils count up to five natural objects while outdoors, and pupils in Year 1 and 2 create symmetrical patterns using natural objects. Most older pupils develop as confident mathematicians, handling larger numbers. For example, they represent data in comparative bar and line graphs to represent and compare the climates in Wales and the Caribbean.

Most pupils are enthusiastic about the Welsh language. They use basic vocabulary and respond to simple questions to communicate successfully. During classroom activities, pupils pronounce words and phrases accurately. Older pupils ask and answer questions in Welsh, and confidently use connectives to extend sentences when discussing their likes and dislikes.

Generally, pupils use digital skills suitably to support their learning. Younger pupils programme devices to follow a specific route. Older pupils use coding to move digital images, compose music, and use a spread sheet to plan a budget for household goods.

Most pupils develop their physical and creative skills well. The youngest throw balls and hold golf tees carefully while hammering them precisely into a pumpkin. As they progress through the school, pupils improve their physical skills through a range of sporting and creative activities. Older pupils move nimbly to dodge, swerve and turn quickly when running to avoid being caught while playing chase. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 mould clay and use modelling tools to form sculptures of squirrels and pupils in Year 3 collaborate to create large collages using drawings and natural resources while outdoors. Older pupils use line, tone and shade effectively to draw symmetrical portraits.

Pupils develop their curiosity and thinking skills well in their inquiry. The youngest pupils work together to raise the incline of a ramp to make a car travel faster. Year 6 pupils collaborate effectively to plot a route across a river using three stepping stones. They reflect on their initial attempts well and make thoughtful refinements to achieve success.

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

Across the school, pupils greet each other, staff and visitors politely and respectfully. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and trusting. This contributes positively to pupils' well-being. Many pupils feel happy and safe at school and share their ideas with adults readily. Most pupils are proud of their school and would recommend it to others. They feel that they are treated fairly and are listened to. They know who to speak to when asking for support and help.

During playtimes and lunchtimes, nearly all pupils are active and enjoy using the range of facilities on offer, and joining in with games. Most pupils understand and accept the need for healthy snacks and this is demonstrated across the school. They recognise the need to develop and maintain a healthy body and mind and explain how this can be achieved and maintained.

Many pupils access a range of extra-curricular clubs to develop their physical skills and promote their well-being effectively. These clubs are well attended and appreciated by the pupils who attend them. Pupils in Years 4, 5, and 6 take on leadership roles that enable them to influence school life positively. For instance, the new Wellbeing Cwtch has been installed as a direct request from the Wellbeing Warriors group.

Across the school nearly all pupils show strong, positive attitudes to learning. They settle well to their tasks, show enthusiasm for their work and are developing well as

confident learners. Most pupils listen well to instructions and concentrate on their work, for example, when completing observational drawings of pumpkins independently in Nursery and Reception. Nearly all of the youngest pupils apply themselves to appropriate, authentic and engaging tasks. They persevere for extended amounts of time to complete their work, building their skills and independence. Most older pupils spend sustained time independently completing tasks appropriate to their learning. They work well together and collaborate successfully supporting each other with learning and ideas. For example, pupils in Year 6 support their peers by giving and receiving feedback during group reading activities.

Across the school pupils are enthusiastic about sharing their learning with staff, visitors and each other. Pupils demonstrate genuine support for each other and value the contributions of their peers in improving their learning.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. This is a strength of the school and is underpinned by an inclusive, warm ethos. Nearly all pupils behave well around the school, inside and outside and during whole-school activities such as assembly. They have a firm sense of right and wrong and develop their understanding of children's rights appropriately.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school is beginning to develop a broad and balanced curriculum. This provides an interesting range of learning experiences through which most pupils develop and apply their skills and knowledge well. Learning experiences are often based on 'big questions' that, in most cases, provide pupils with meaningful contexts for their learning. For example, whilst learning about the work of contemporary artists, younger pupils are inspired to explore how everyday objects can be used to create two-dimensional, three-dimensional and digital works of art.

Teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to contribute to planning meaningful learning experiences. For example, older pupils learn about the electrification of the local railway line having identified that ongoing construction work is currently affecting their parents' commute to work.

The school enriches its curriculum well through visits and activities within the local area and further afield. For example, older pupils develop their cultural and geographical awareness when visiting famous landmarks in London. Younger pupils learn valuable den building and survival techniques in the local environment. The school uses its community links well to support its curriculum provision. Pupils have developed their awareness of local causes and financial literacy efficiently through working with charities to plan and host beneficial fundraising events.

The school provides pupils with a valuable range of experiences to learn about the educational opportunities available to them as they become older and develop their aspirations. For example, the school's oldest pupils visit careers fayres, work with a construction company to learn about building design and project management and develop useful film making skills with a local television company.

Nearly all staff develop highly beneficial working relationships with pupils. Teachers establish classes that are calm, constructive learning environments where pupils

interact positively with others. As a result, many pupils develop the confidence to take risks when tackling their learning.

Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the concepts and skills they are teaching. In most lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and intentions for learning. They develop useful success criteria with pupils and provide a variety of stimulating approaches that support learning successfully and engage pupils well. However, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length, improve their writing or have high enough expectations of presentation.

Many teachers provide valuable instant feedback, which enables pupils to improve their learning. As a result, many pupils have a clear understanding of what to do and how to do it. However, in a few classes teachers do not provide feedback to pupils often enough. As a result, pupils do not always understand the purpose of their learning or how to improve their work. Consequently, a few pupils do not understand the purpose of their learning, how well their learning is developing or how to improve their learning.

The school uses a range of assessments to gather data and monitor pupils' progress appropriately. Teachers and leaders discuss every pupil's learning each term and use these dialogues well to plan for pupils' next steps in learning. Teachers involve pupils in discussing their learning and this enables many pupils to understand the progress they are making. In collaboration with their teachers, pupils lead meetings with parents during the autumn term, explaining their progress and next steps, and how their parents can help at home.

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

The school is a happy, caring community. Staff treat pupils fairly and with respect. They place a high priority on the well-being of pupils and show exceptional levels of care. This results in positive relationships across the school and contributes to the school being an orderly environment where pupils can learn and play safely and effectively.

Staff know pupils well and adapt the learning effectively to ensure that pupils are able to succeed. Teachers deploy highly skilled teaching assistants effectively to support pupils to deepen their learning and to challenge themselves appropriately. For example, during a role-play activity in Nursery and Reception, teaching assistants ensure that pupils practise their numbers and count accurately.

Staff support the emotional, health and social needs of nearly all pupils successfully matching interventions to pupils' individual needs. The school supports pupils' well-being productively using whole-school strategies, for example to resolve any disputes between pupils. These approaches are highly effective. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and use clear and established processes for managing behaviour successfully.

The school has effective processes for identifying ALN. Pupils with ALN are well supported by the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) and the staff. As part of transition, staff visit pre-school play settings and make home visits to discuss individual pupils and plan for their needs. Staff set bespoke targets for pupils with

additional needs and evaluate these pupils' learning regularly to assess progress and plan for pupils' next steps in their learning. The ALNCo is developing the planning and mapping of support across the school, to ensure that there is consistency of provision for all pupils. The ALNCo works effectively with a wide range of external agencies to enhance the support provided to pupils. The school has productive working relationships with parents and provides training to support and develop parents' understanding of a range of areas of ALN.

Staff use an effective range of strategies that enable most pupils with ALN to access learning experiences successfully. Support staff are used skilfully to provide bespoke additional support within the classroom. Consequently, most pupils, including those with ALN, make good progress. In many cases, teachers provide effective support. They scaffold learning and challenge pupils to ensure they engage and make progress. This is particularly notable with younger pupils, where highly skilled staff meet the needs of pupils through high quality learning experiences, high expectations and sensitive support and guidance.

The school provides appropriate opportunities to develop pupils' moral, spiritual and social skills through collective worship. The school encourages pupils to reflect on a range of values including kindness and gratitude. This develops pupils' ethical understanding well.

Staff support pupils to develop their leadership skills through membership of pupil voice groups. These groups influence change at the school, for example through setting up a healthy snack tasting station. Pupils are beginning to focus on children's rights and this is starting to help pupils to form their own opinions on a range of local and World issues.

The school's provision for developing understanding of wider world heritage is evolving through its enquiry-based approach to learning. The school provides pupils with a range of opportunities to enrich learning and deepen understanding of the local and wider area through a range of relevant educational visits.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of sporting and recreational clubs. These activities often develop pupils' teamwork and self-confidence well.

Staff promote a positive and robust culture of safeguarding, ensuring that the welfare of all is a high priority. The school adopts a strong multi-agency approach to provide appropriate help and to support the welfare of pupils and their families.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has a secure vision, shared by all staff and governors. She provides effective and compassionate leadership and successfully ensures that, by the time they leave the school, most pupils make good progress from their starting points. Through establishing strong relationships across the school, the headteacher has created a positive culture of learning and well-being.

Leaders have developed a caring and committed staff team who contribute to the school's strong provision and inclusive culture well. Leaders are clear in their

expectations and communicate them effectively. Nearly all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and discharge their duties efficiently. Leaders are developing an increasingly beneficial culture of collaboration, support and challenge.

Senior leaders' approach to developing the school's curriculum is proactive and reflective. They have a clear vision for the curriculum and are beginning to refine the chosen approach in response to staff feedback and monitoring the needs of pupils. Leaders and teachers carefully track pupils' progress through a range of assessment strategies. The information gathered is used by teachers to inform their planning and ensure that learning is relevant to pupils' needs. Leaders ensure that all staff access relevant professional learning to support and develop their own classroom practice. For example, all staff received training on the teaching of reading, which has impacted positively on provision and progress. There are appropriate arrangements for performance management. All school staff have targets linked to the relevant standards, school priorities and their own professional development needs. This supports the school in achieving its improvement priorities.

The governing body is fully committed to supporting the school. Governors are proud of the active role they play in the life of the school and value the opportunities they have to spend time with pupils and staff. Governors act as a critical friend through thoughtful questioning of school leaders and staff, for instance in relation to next steps in its work to improve attendance. This helps them to ensure that strategic decisions are well considered and in line with the school's immediate needs. The governing body understands its statutory duties and fulfils these well. It works successfully with the headteacher to promote a positive safeguarding culture across the school and ensures that appropriate policies are in place to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Governors join senior leaders in activities that enable them to have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and its work to address current improvement priorities. Governors, leaders and staff gather valuable first-hand evidence. In general, improvement priorities are realistic and relevant. They bring about measurable improvement and address both national and local priorities. However, monitoring does not always focus sufficiently on the progress pupils are making or the impact teaching has on pupils' learning.

Procedures for monitoring and managing the school's budget are rigorous. Senior leaders utilise the school's finances well and decisions on spending are made in the best interests of the pupils. The school is staffed suitably and learning environments are stimulating and well resourced. Leaders use the pupil development grant effectively to fund worthwhile initiatives such as the deployment of the family engagement partner.

Leaders work diligently to ensure that relationships with parents are strong. The school's communication with parents is comprehensive. Leaders provide regular opportunities for parents to share their opinions about the school's work and their children's progress with the school. Families are supported well with opportunities to swap reading books and school uniform items and through the 'Big Box Bwyd' scheme, which provides food at a discounted rate. Overall, leaders address the impact of poverty on educational attainment and well-being productively.

## 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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

© Crown Copyright 2023: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 27/12/2023