A report on

Tiryberth Primary School

New Road
Tiryberth
Hengoed
CF82 8AU

Date of inspection: December 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Tiryberth Primary School

Name of provider	Tiryberth Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	140
Pupils of statutory school age	106
Number in nursery classes	19
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 23.7%)	22.7%
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 13.2%)	32.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/09/2015
Start date of inspection	11/12/2023

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

Tir-y-berth Primary School provides an inclusive and nurturing environment. Staff foster positive relationships and create a friendly and supportive atmosphere where pupils are treated as individuals and feel valued. The school has an exceptionally strong focus on well-being and emotional support and as a result pupils behave well and engage enthusiastically in lessons.

The school provides highly effective support for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) including those in its Specialist Resource Bases (SRB). As a result, most pupils make good progress during their time in the school. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school and leaders robustly monitor pupil attendance. However, a few pupils, including those who are eligible for free school meals, do not attend as regularly as their peers.

The school is well-led by the executive headteacher and the senior leaders who work purposefully alongside the governing body to secure improvements for the school. School leaders work with compassion and purpose to support pupils to reach their full potential. Overall, they understand the school's strengths and areas for development and plan appropriate strategic actions to secure improvement. However, monitoring systems to measure and improve teaching do not consistently identify a few important shortcomings.

The school's curriculum promotes a sense of belonging, equity, and diversity. Teachers provide rich and authentic learning experiences for the pupils. As a result, pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning and begin to develop aspirations for the future. Most pupils make good progress in their learning and many teachers plan exciting opportunities for pupils to build on their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. Most younger pupils are developing their reading skills effectively. However, the provision for older pupils to expand and build their higher order reading skills is less well developed. The development of mathematical skills across the school is a strength. Nearly all pupils make strong progress in mathematics and numeracy from their starting points, and develop resilience and perseverance when facing challenges.

Recommendations

R1   Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement processes to ensure that they focus precisely on the quality of teaching and progress in learning

R2   Improve pupils' reading skills

R3   Continue to improve attendance

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start school in Nursery with speaking, listening and social skills appropriate for their age. As they move through the school, nearly all pupils make good progress with their oracy, writing and mathematical skills. Nearly all pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals make at least expected progress in line with their targets and starting points.

Most pupils use a good range of suitable vocabulary to talk about their work. For example, a few pupils in Nursery talk about how they use the natural materials in the outdoor area to make a stable for the animals. Most pupils in Reception and Year 1 speak clearly and engage in conversation with an adult enthusiastically, for instance when talking about the sleigh they made for Santa in the construction zone. Older pupils use a wide range of vocabulary effectively when describing in detail what they enjoy about their learning experiences.

Most pupils make appropriate progress with their reading skills. Younger pupils have a good understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds and make rapid progress in their early reading skills. By Year 2, most pupils use these successfully to support their work in class. For example, they read with clarity, expression and an awareness of their audience when reading a letter to the class from Santa, before replying by email. Overall, many older pupils read texts suitably well and name their favourite authors. However, they do not build on their early reading skills well enough and their ability to apply their higher order skills is limited. For example, they do not always know how to skim and scan texts to find information quickly.

Nearly all pupils, including those in the specialist resource base (SRB), develop their writing skills well and make good progress during their time in school. The youngest pupils practise their mark making skills in a variety of ways. By Year 1, nearly all pupils form letters correctly and construct simple descriptive sentences. By Year 4, they write confidently using full sentences, for example to write a diary account in the first person about Crowky's greatest day. Most older pupils write maturely for a range of purposes and understand the features of different text types well. They organise their work into paragraphs and edit their writing, looking for ways to improve. Pupils in the SRB edit their letters to Santa skilfully, before taking them to the post box. Nearly all pupils apply their language skills successfully when writing across the curriculum.

Nearly all pupils make strong progress with their mathematical and problem-solving skills. Nursery pupils have a sound grasp of number and count objects up to twenty accurately. They count backwards from ten and are beginning to understand one

more and one less. Younger pupils in the SRB use non-standard measures well to sort out the Christmas presents that had lost their labels. By Year 1, nearly all pupils count confidently in multiples of two and name simple two-dimensional shapes. A few pupils collect information from their peers about their choice of food for the Christmas party and record the results in a tally chart accurately. Older pupils build on their mathematical skills well and use their numeracy skills confidently in other subjects to solve problems, for example when calculating how far Santa must travel, how long it will take him and if he will make it home before Mrs Claus leaves for the gym. Many younger pupils in the SRB order weights to find out which reindeer has put on the most weight after Christmas and older pupils investigate if they can run faster than a mouse.

Nearly all pupils develop their Welsh oracy skills competently. Younger pupils show their understanding of Welsh by following simple commands and counting along with the class teacher. Many older pupils use their Welsh language skills to ask and answer simple questions about where they live and their favourite foods. A few pupils use past tense phrases well to explain where they went on the weekend.

Most pupils develop confident digital skills and use these purposefully to support their work across the curriculum. Younger pupils use a range of software confidently, for instance to research Welsh musicians and create stop motion movies about Rama and Sita. Older pupils input formulae into a spreadsheet competently to calculate the income and profit of their burpee challenge for Children in Need and present the results in a line graph confidently. However, pupils do not progressively develop digital skills well enough overtime.

Many pupils progress well in their physical development and have a good understanding of the importance of keeping fit. Older pupils enjoy participating in a Mini-Olympics where they use their mathematical skills to measure their achievements accurately. Most pupils develop their creative skills competently and demonstrate these skills superbly through dance, music, and art.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy school and value the care and support that they receive from staff. They feel safe in the school's nurturing environment and know who they can talk to if they have a problem. Nearly all pupils develop positive working relationships with the staff, and they have a clear understanding of the school's expectations of behaviour. As a result, nearly all pupils are kind and considerate towards each other, staff, and visitors.

Nearly all pupils across the school have positive attitudes to learning. They participate enthusiastically in lessons and focus well when working independently, with a partner and in small groups. Older pupils contribute to their learning appropriately. For example, they suggest ideas at the beginning of their topics. However, this is in the early stages of development. Many pupils appreciate the opportunity to share their thoughts with their peers as part of their learning and do so with maturity and confidence.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating a balanced diet and taking part in regular exercise. They enjoy developing their physical skills and fitness during the

school day. They understand the importance of staying safe when using digital devices. For example, they know the importance of creating a strong password and why they should not share their password with others. They understand not to accept friend requests from strangers and talk knowledgably about their digital footprint.

Most older pupils talk confidently about their rights as children and understand that they should also respect the rights of their peers. As they move through the school, pupils show an increasing awareness of the need to treat everyone with respect and celebrate their differences. Many pupils enjoy sharing information about their own cultures and beliefs with peers. For example, during Romania Day, a few pupils talk about the weather in their country and the food they like to eat.

Many pupils develop their leadership skills through the good range of pupil voice committees that the school offers. Pupils talk about their roles confidently and identify how their work has made a difference to the school and the local community. For example, digital leaders support staff and peers with using digital devices and produce a 'top tips' blog for the school website.

Nearly all pupils settle quickly in lessons, they engage well in their learning and remain focused for appropriate periods of time. Most pupils enjoy taking part in the engaging and exciting learning activities to develop their problem solving and creative skills. For example, older pupils plan and organise charity events, calculating cost and profit to raise money for playtime equipment. Many pupils begin to show resilience and persevere when they find things tricky. For example, younger pupils show strong determination when making a stable from plastic straws.

Many pupils listen carefully to verbal feedback and older pupils use written feedback to edit their work appropriately, for instance to improve their writing to include the features of different genres. Nearly all pupils work on tasks independently and they are sensible in their approach to learning. Across the school, pupils use a range of tools and resources independently to help them with their work. Younger pupils use the learning wall displays beneficially, for example to support them when counting in multiples of two. Older pupils use spelling books unaided to collect words of which they are unsure.

Most pupils attend school regularly. However, a few pupils who are eligible for free school meals do not attend as regularly as their peers. Recently, the support provided by school leaders for these families is beginning to have a positive impact on improving engagement and attendance for these pupils.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has used professional learning and partnerships with other schools well to develop a shared vision for its curriculum that places pupils' well-being at its heart. Many teachers give pupils useful opportunities to influence their learning. For example, at the start of each topic, teachers ask pupils to share their ideas to inform the planning of the term's work. However, this is not consistent across all classes. Most teachers plan a range of stimulating and challenging activities that develop pupils' independence successfully and help them to become independent learners from a young age. Teachers offer a few opportunities for pupils to enhance their

learning in the outdoors but, overall, they do not plan for learning in the outdoors often or effectively enough.

Most teachers plan for pupils to develop and consolidate numeracy skills in real life contexts. For example, older pupils use their reasoning skills successfully when planning, designing, making, and selling items for the annual Christmas enterprise event and successfully calculate the costs and profit made.

Literacy skills develop well across the school and most teachers plan successfully for pupils to apply and practice these skills. For example, the oldest pupils write a letter of thanks following a visit to the Egyptian museum and the youngest pupils write lists of equipment needed to build a sleigh for Santa. Many teachers effectively develop reading skills of younger pupils. However, older pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop and improve higher order reading skills.

Most teachers plan effectively for pupils to use their digital skills to support their learning, for example pupils access digital platforms to complete learning activities. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils develop the full range of digital skills, such as coding and the use of spreadsheets, and databases.

There are suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, linguistic, and diverse nature of Wales. For example, pupils participate in Diwrnod Shwmae and, by taking part in a Show Racism the Red Card workshop, pupils consider the importance of challenging prejudice.

The school offers its pupils a range of rich educational experiences, including visits within the locality and residential trips. For example, Year 6 visit the Urdd residential centre at Llangrannog to develop their Welsh language skills. Visitors and sport coaches regularly come into school to share their expertise and inspire and raise pupils' aspirations for future careers. Extra-curricular clubs such as rugby, cookery and dance further develop and enhance pupils' skills and experiences.

The provision for pupils to learn the importance of keeping fit and make healthy food choices is good. Nearly all teachers support pupils to understand the importance of keeping themselves safe when using online devices. For example, older pupils share their knowledge about how to use digital devices and social media safely with younger pupils.

Staff across the school develop caring and supportive relationships with pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils feel comfortable when asking for support. Teachers successfully deploy support staff to assist the development of pupils' skills and well-being. Most support staff have a good understanding of individual pupils' needs and respond effectively. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and develop pupils' positive attitudes to learning well.

Across the school, nearly all staff create a stimulating and attractive learning environment. Classroom displays celebrate pupils' work whilst also providing useful scaffolding to prompt pupils' learning. Many teachers use a range of approaches to engage learners. In the best examples, teachers encourage and plan for pupils to develop as independent and resilient learners. Many teachers have a strong subject

knowledge and use effective questioning strategies to probe pupils' understanding and extend their learning.

The school has effective systems to track the progress of pupils. Nearly all staff collaborate well to identify pupils in need of additional support and, overall, most teachers use assessment effectively to inform next steps in learning.

Many teachers share the objectives for lessons clearly with pupils. They provide valuable feedback that enables pupils to know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. In the best cases, teachers plan well for pupils to assess and reflect on their learning. However, in a few classes, teachers do not use assessment to inform teaching and learning well enough and pupils are sometimes unclear of the purpose of their learning.

Care, support and guidance

Staff build strong working relationships with pupils, parents and carers. They provide valuable targeted support for pupils in both mainstream classes and in the SRB, as well as effective advice, support and guidance for parents and carers when needed. Staff respond thoughtfully to pupils' emotional needs. The school's inclusive ethos enables pupils to settle well into school and contributes to their well-being as they move through the school.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs is a strength. The additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCos) work with staff to monitor the progress of pupils, identify those in need of support and plan relevant interventions. Staff reflect thoughtfully on the impact of these at regular intervals and amend or discontinue them if necessary. This helps to ensure that pupils with ALN make good progress during their time in school.

The school promotes the development of its pupils as ethically aware citizens through their pupil voice groups. The various groups meet frequently, devise action plans and review the impact of their work. For example, the Eco Committee organises litter picks, oversee recycling arrangements and encourages the responsible use of electricity and water to save money and benefit the environment.

Topic work enables pupils to study different countries and cultures and develop their understanding of the wider world. Pupils regularly reflect on the values and beliefs of others and older pupils begin to empathise with those that inspire them. For example, Years 5 and 6 learn about the life and career of the inspirational headteacher Betty Campbell. Daily collective worship promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development well. Staff promote values such as respect, empathy and compassion and give pupils valuable opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs and values. For example, in an assembly the younger pupils learn about the importance of gifts and giving at Christmas time.

The school offers many opportunities for pupils to learn and practise skills and teamwork in after-school clubs. Nearly all pupils develop self-confidence and creativity as they perform to a variety of audiences for a wide range of purposes. For example, Year 4 and Year 5 pupils take part in a Darcey Bussell ballet lesson and Year 2 and Year 3 pupils learn how to play simple tunes on recorders. The school

ensures that pupils from all backgrounds can participate fully in school life, including taking part in visits and clubs.

The school monitors pupils' attendance well and identifies those pupils whose attendance falls below an acceptable level. Beneficial systems are in place to drive improvement in attendance rates and leaders and staff communicate their expectations to parents and pupils consistently. However, despite these measures and recent improvements, overall rates of attendance remain too low.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and give no cause for concern. Staff at all levels understand their roles in keeping pupils safe. The school works closely with outside agencies to respond effectively to any concerns and provides support to pupils and their families where necessary.

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher leads the school successfully on its improvement journey. She has high expectations of her leadership team and other staff. She is passionate about ensuring that pupils have the skills and learning behaviours to give them choices in their adult lives. The school's vision and aims align well with the philosophy of the Curriculum for Wales. They focus on providing pupils with rich learning experiences to develop pupils as skilful and knowledgeable learners. There is a notable emphasis on equity and developing pupils' aspirations to achieve highly, irrespective of their circumstances. Overall, leaders establish and maintain a strong safeguarding culture.

The school's well-being strategy has had a positive impact on pupils' engagement with, and enjoyment of, learning. Leaders model and promote professional values and behaviours successfully. They hold staff to account effectively and have been successful in developing an engaged and motivated team of practitioners. Leaders consider the well-being of staff carefully. The current executive headteacher arrangement works well for the school. There is a clear line of responsibility, which provides the school with stability and continuity in addition to developing leadership capacity throughout the school.

Leaders balance the development of national and local priorities and the school's needs successfully. They consider possible new developments carefully and make judicious, evidence-informed decisions about the strategic direction the school will take. Senior leaders drive curriculum development and have a clear rationale for the school's approach to curriculum design.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school's curriculum offer and are proud of the stimulating learning experiences the school provides for pupils. The governing body is highly effective and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. For example, as a result of the assessment information that leaders share with them, governors have a good understanding of the progress that different groups of pupils make. Governors hold the senior leaders to account through challenge and scrutiny, but also provide support through their dedication and commitment to school improvement. They ensure appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances well They prioritise spending successfully to meet pupils' needs and to support the school's improvement priorities. They seek innovative solutions to ensure that they sustain effective provision, for example by accessing community grants. They monitor grant funding closely and evaluate the impact it has on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and their emotional well-being.

Leaders ensure strong working relationships with parents, families, and the community. The school collaborates closely with parents and the wider community. It works well to support families, for example by subsidising the cost of educational visits with the money raised through school events, by providing 'pre-loved' uniform and by offering payment plans for trips. Parents are positive about the school's communication with them, and how it considers their views and values them as partners in their children's education.

The executive headteacher presents a clear overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and curriculum in written documents and through professional dialogue. There is comprehensive reporting against priorities in each headteacher's report to governors and through sub-committee reporting.

On the whole, self-evaluation processes are effective in driving school improvement. The staff and governors work closely to identify shortcomings. They have a sound understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and the progress towards meeting its intentions. However, self-evaluation processes do not focus well enough on the impact of teaching and learning on pupil outcomes and the progressive development of skills.

The executive headteacher nurtures staff at all levels and supports their professional learning. Distributed leadership ensures that all staff have responsibility for driving improvements through the school. Staff attend a variety of training linked to both school improvement and professional development. In most instances, performance management processes for teachers and support staff align closely to the school's improvement priorities. However, individual staff targets do not focus well enough on pedagogical practice and the quality of teaching.

The school is collaborating well with cluster schools to strengthen approaches to teaching, learning, monitoring and self-evaluation. Staff are developing links with the executive headteacher's substantive school to compare standards and teaching across the two schools. Wider cluster work is a strength with an effective cluster plan in place. This focuses closely on the development of a shared approach to improving aspects of pedagogy and pupil outcomes.

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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