



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

A report on

Hafod Primary School

**Wayne Street
Trehafod
Pontypridd
RCT
CF37 2NL**

Date of inspection: January 2024

by

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

About Hafod Primary School

Name of provider	Hafod 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	112
Pupils of statutory school age	90
Number in nursery classes	11
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%)	27.7%
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%)	18.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/11/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/03/2016
Start date of inspection	22/01/2024
<p>The school is currently going through a difficult time. During the inspection both the DHT and foundation lead were absent with agency staff covering their classes. As the school is small (four mainstream classes and an SRB) this has had a big impact and the HT was the only member of the SLT in school. Additionally, an NQT took up a position in the Nursery/reception class two weeks before the inspection. Historically staffing at the school has been stable. The Foundation lead was returning to work the week after the inspection. The team was careful to look at teaching over time and not to judge the quality of teaching on observations of agency staff.</p>	

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

Hafod Primary School is a caring, inclusive school with pupils' well-being at its heart. The positive relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are a strong feature of the school. Staff know pupils well and respond with sensitivity to their emotional and social needs. This contributes greatly to their well-being and helps pupils to settle easily to school life. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points including those eligible for free school meals. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) including those in the learning support class (LSC) make effective progress from their individual starting points.

Teachers and support staff have a strong understanding of pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. For instance, teachers regularly identify short term targets that help pupils understand how to achieve the next steps in their learning. They plan responsive activities that enable pupils to practise and develop the individual skills they are currently working on. These approaches are successful in supporting pupils to make good progress.

Leaders and staff are developing a broad and balanced curriculum that focuses well on developing pupils' skills progressively over time. Pupils across the school have suitable opportunities to contribute to their learning experiences by suggesting ideas for activities at the beginning of each theme. However, overall, opportunities for pupils to make decisions about what and how they learn are at an early stage of development. Younger pupils and those in the LSC have a few opportunities to learn outdoors during lessons. However, outdoor areas are underdeveloped and, across the school, provision for outdoor learning is limited.

The school has a strong track record for making and sustaining improvement. This is particularly evident in the provision for pupil well-being and in the school's beneficial links with its families. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective. Leaders strive to promote good pupil attendance. However, rates of attendance have not improved well enough over time, particularly for vulnerable pupils where absences have increased.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all pupils have regular worthwhile opportunities to make choices about what and how they learn
- R2 Provide effective opportunities for outdoor learning across the school
- R3 Improve attendance, particularly for vulnerable pupils

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

When they start school, around half of nursery pupils have literacy and numeracy skills below those expected for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make good progress across the curriculum. Those with ALN in the LSC, and across the school, make good progress towards their individual targets.

Most pupils develop their literacy skills successfully. They make strong progress in developing their oracy and communication skills. The youngest pupils develop their vocabulary well such as when they describe a familiar story or talk about the features of model houses they have made. By Year 6 most pupils have well developed oracy skills. They listen to their peers attentively and support each other to generate and develop ideas through discussion effectively.

Most pupils make strong progress in reading. Nearly all of the youngest pupils listen carefully to a story and many readily join in with well-known repeated phrases. As they move through the school, they learn to read fluently, using a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words with confidence. Older pupils build on this progress well and many show enthusiasm for reading. For example, pupils in Year 3 speak with enjoyment about favourite books and those they plan to read in the future. By Year 6 many pupils show an effective grasp of more complex texts. For example, they understand a character's emotions and the motivation for their actions.

Overall, most pupils' writing skills develop well. From a young age, they show enthusiasm when experimenting with mark making and letter formation. By Year 2, many pupils are beginning to develop their writing through the use of adjectives and direct speech. Many older pupils add interest to their writing through a range of strategies such as the use of similes and personification. For example, they describe a lamppost as 'drowning' or a tree as 'sneezing', during a storm. Most pupils apply their writing skills across the curriculum suitably, such as when older pupils write an animal fact file when learning about the rainforest.

Across the school, most pupils develop their numeracy skills well. Pupils in the reception class count objects to 10 with confidence and name common two-dimensional shapes. As they move through the school, they gain a good understanding of place value. Pupils in Year 3 apply this knowledge effectively when subtracting numbers up to 1,000. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils are competent, confident mathematicians across a broad range of mathematical concepts. Pupils in the LSC make good progress in developing numeracy skills. They enjoy practical activities such as when they predict the length of a range of items

before measuring them. Throughout the school, pupils are beginning to apply their number skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 calculate a supermarket budget or use a Venn Diagram to categorise herbivores and carnivores.

During their time at the school most pupils develop as confident Welsh speakers. Younger pupils develop a range of simple vocabulary including colours, numbers and words to describe the weather. Pupils steadily build on these skills and, by Year 4, most pupils use their Welsh language skills enthusiastically as they ask and answer a range of questions in the present tense confidently. By Years 5 and 6, pupils give extended answers to questions and use an impressive range of vocabulary when talking about places, foods and sports.

Overall, most pupils make effective progress with their digital skills and apply their learning across the curriculum well. Younger pupils access a range of apps and games to support the development of skills such as counting and letter formation with success. By Year 2, most pupils access their digital accounts independently to support their learning across the curriculum. Older pupils develop a range of skills such as when they use coding to draw a variety of shapes or create animated presentations of their research on climate change.

Throughout the school, most pupils develop their physical and creative skills well. For example, pupils in the LSC plan a sequence of movements and shapes, which they perform for their peers during a PE lesson. Younger pupils develop their understanding of line, shape and colour successfully when exploring a range of media such as collage, watercolours and chalk pastels. Older pupils enjoy opportunities to develop their musical skills such as playing the recorder during regular sessions provided by a specialist provider. Many pupils extend their thinking and problem-solving skills appropriately when given the opportunity. For example, younger pupils persist and try different approaches when attempting to make a model house from construction straws.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils including those in the LSC enjoy school and value the care and support they receive from staff. They feel safe in the school's caring and inclusive environment and know who they can talk to if they have any worries. Most pupils develop positive working relationships with staff and behave well in class and when moving around the school. They understand the importance of being kind. They are considerate and caring towards each other, staff, and visitors. In the LSC, pupils learn how to build friendships, take turns and share ideas with one another successfully.

Overall, most pupils settle quickly in lessons. They engage well in their learning and remain focused for appropriate periods of time. Most pupils understand the importance of persevering when things are difficult. From a young age they develop aspirations about how they would like to live their lives. For example, pupils in Year 1 encourage others to believe in themselves following a discussion about Tanni Grey-Thompson overcoming physical challenges to become a successful athlete. Pupils across the school contribute to their learning experiences suitably by suggesting ideas for activities at the beginning of topics. However, overall, pupils do not make

enough decisions about their learning such as strategies they will use to complete tasks or the resources they will use.

Most pupils respond positively to the feedback provided by staff to help them improve their work. For example, pupils make beneficial improvements to their writing after considering feedback from their teacher. Most pupils are beginning to assess their own learning confidently. Older pupils reflect on their learning skilfully to identify what they have done successfully and how they can make improvements. Pupils use classroom resources and wall displays to help them with their work suitably. For example, older pupils use a wall display to support them with their Welsh vocabulary.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating a balanced diet and participating in regular exercise. They enjoy developing their physical skills at breaktime when using the play equipment and playing games organised by the Sports' Ambassadors. Most pupils understand the need to stay safe when using digital devices. For example, they know the importance of creating a strong password and why they should create an anonymous username when playing games online.

Many pupils, including those in the LSC, appreciate opportunities to develop their leadership skills through a range of pupil voice committees. Pupils talk about their roles confidently and identify how their work has made a difference to the school and local charities. For example, the school council organised a coffee morning to raise money for Macmillan.

As they move through the school, pupils show an increasing awareness of the need to treat everyone with respect. Most older pupils talk about their rights as children confidently and understand that they should also respect the rights of their peers.

Many pupils attend school regularly. However, rates of absence remain too high particularly among vulnerable pupils.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has established a clear vision for the curriculum, which is firmly based on nurturing pupils and meeting their individual needs. There is a particularly strong focus on shared values and inclusivity.

A range of themes capture pupils' interest well. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoy creating mythical creatures and developing their understanding of folklore during a Myths and Legends theme. Staff identify frequent opportunities to enrich the curriculum through educational trips and visitors to the school. For example, during a Dream Big Smile Often theme, younger pupils enjoy the opportunity to work with a puppet theatre company to explore the emotions of different characters. The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the history and culture of Wales. Younger pupils learn about their local community effectively as they explore the history of the village.

Overall, leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and builds systematically on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills. However, a few elements of the religion, values and ethics (RVE) curriculum are at an early stage of development. Younger pupils and those in the LSC have suitable opportunities to

access designated outdoor areas during lessons. However, these spaces have not been developed effectively and are largely underused. Across the school, provision for outdoor learning is limited.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour well in most lessons and around the school. They provide beneficial support for pupils with emotional needs. Throughout the school, staff have strong working relationships with pupils, which foster a highly supportive and inclusive environment. In the LSC the complex needs of pupils are understood clearly and appropriate individualised strategies are put in place to meet their needs. Staff engage pupils effectively through interesting and well-planned activities.

Throughout the school, lessons have clear learning intentions and staff provide useful explanations to ensure pupils understand what they need to do. They recap on pupils' prior learning at the beginning of lessons successfully. In a few cases, this supports learning particularly well. For example, older pupils engage in an active steppingstone game where they recall knowledge confidently and discuss techniques to further improve their writing. In many lessons, the pace of learning is productive and supports pupils to maintain interest and concentrate well. Teachers and support staff have a strong understanding of their pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. They encourage pupils and praise them for their achievements. In many lessons, staff use effective questioning to challenge pupils' thinking and check for understanding. Staff provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to contribute to their learning experiences by suggesting ideas relating to their current theme. However, on a day-to-day basis, most activities are directed by adults, which limits opportunities for pupils to make decisions about what and how they will learn.

Teachers ensure that beneficial ongoing feedback helps pupils identify how to improve their work effectively. Opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback are frequent and support pupils to make good progress. Teachers regularly identify short term targets for pupils that help them understand how to achieve the next steps in their learning. In many cases, they plan responsive activities that enable pupils to practise and develop the individual skills they are currently working on. Staff regularly encourage pupils to review each other's work. For example, pupils in Year 1 and 2 are supported to give helpful feedback to each other about their chalk pastel drawings. This creates a positive ethos of ongoing improvement, which supports pupils' learning well.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a happy, caring community. Staff know pupils well and respond with sensitivity to their emotional and social needs. This contributes greatly to their well-being and helps pupils to settle easily to school life. The positive relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are a strong feature of the school.

Provision for ALN is led and managed well. The ALN Co-ordinator ensures that effective strategies to identify and meet pupils' individual needs are firmly in place. Staff track and monitor pupils' progress rigorously. They communicate closely with parents to ensure that they know pupils well and use this information purposefully to meet the needs of pupils. Staff in the LSC provide personalised learning plans for pupils that support learning successfully. They support their pupils to integrate

smoothly into the life of the school through, for example, attending assembly and joining pupil leadership groups.

The school's motto, 'be ready, be respectful and be safe', clearly outlines the expectations for pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Staff provide pupils with regular opportunities to discuss and reflect upon positive behaviour throughout the year. For example, they plan useful activities during anti-bullying week to help pupils understand that bullying is never acceptable. The school promotes inclusion and diversity suitably, such as when pupils share their experiences of attending Pride celebrations, during a school assembly.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective in many areas. Leaders have established clear procedures to help pupils develop a strong moral code, including how to treat others respectfully. The school plans worthwhile opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of shared values and to consider the values that are most important to them.

Staff develop pupils' understanding of the importance of sustainability effectively. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 learn about renewable energy during a visit to Parc Stormy where they learn about wind turbines. Staff promote the importance of being healthy through the curriculum appropriately. For instance, they help pupils to understand the sugar content of different foods, and taste test different fruits.

The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to have an active role as leaders through pupil committees including the school council, eco council and sports ambassadors. This enables pupils to make improvements to the work of the school such as increasing pupils' physical activity during playtime.

Staff plan an effective range of engaging visits to enhance pupils' understanding of their heritage and local community. For example, older pupils visit the Rhondda Heritage Museum and learn about the Aberfan disaster. They take on the role of history detectives to learn about prehistoric Rhondda Cynon Taf and produce a film to showcase their work. The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to participate in performance and sporting events. For instance, they perform the Christmas concert in the village hall and older pupils participate in a football tournament.

Leaders strive to promote good pupil attendance. Strategies include monitoring absences carefully and maintaining communication with parents. However, rates of attendance have not improved well enough over time, particularly for vulnerable pupils where overall rates of absence have increased.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that there are effective policies and procedures in place, which all staff follow to ensure the safety of learners and staff. The school curriculum supports pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe well. For instance, pupils learn about road safety and how to stay safe online.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that has placed it at the heart of the community. She has created an ethos where pupils feel valued, safe and cared for. Leaders monitor pupil progress robustly and ensure that most pupils make good progress as they move through the school. They give priority to safeguarding and have created a strong safeguarding culture.

The headteacher sets high expectations for staff, pupils and herself. She has created an effective, engaged team of support staff who are committed to the school. Leaders deploy staff at all levels to support pupils' teaching and learning well. Professional development involves all staff. They have worthwhile opportunities to develop their skills, both as part of whole-school initiatives and as part of their individual professional development. For example, staff have been trained in implementing ongoing assessment strategies that have contributed well to ensuring that pupils make good progress. Staff in the LSC attend regular specialist training to ensure they meet the individual needs of pupils successfully.

Governors contribute purposefully to financial aspects of the school's planning for improvement. They provide useful oversight and input to the way the Pupil Development Grant is used to support vulnerable pupils in their reading and emotional and social well-being. Governors know the strengths and areas of development for the school well. They keep informed about progress with the school's plans for improvement through thorough headteacher's reports. Governors are supportive of all aspects of the life of the school. They monitor the performance of senior leaders and fulfil their role as a 'critical friend' appropriately. Governors ensure that food and drink provided by the school complies with legislation and the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders establish productive relationships with families and the wider school community. The school provides worthwhile opportunities for parents to learn more about their child's education and increase their capacity to support their child's learning. For example, staff run a helpful coffee morning for parents to inform them about the way the school teaches mathematics. The school has a thriving Parent Teacher Association that contributes significantly to the community ethos fostered by the school.

The headteacher involves staff, pupils and parents in self-evaluation and improvement processes purposefully. Leaders gather robust first-hand evidence about learning and provision. They maintain a clear focus on the impact of provision on pupil progress and well-being. The school uses self-evaluation findings well to devise relevant priorities and actions for improvement. For example, monitoring activity showed that pupils needed to improve their reasoning in mathematics. Consequently, this is one of the school's current priorities for improvement.

Leaders address national priorities well overall. Recent improvement work has focused firmly on developing pupil well-being, literacy and numeracy skills and Curriculum for Wales. Leaders also ensure that staff plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in formal and informal situations and implement these plans effectively.

Leaders maintain an overview of the school's progress and act in a timely manner if things are not going to plan. For example, a previously used tracking system was quickly changed when it proved to be unfit for purpose. The school has a strong track record for making and sustaining improvement. This is particularly evident in the provision for pupil well-being and in the school's beneficial links with its families.

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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Publication date: 25/03/2024