



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

A report on

Maes-Y-Coed Primary School

**Lanwern Road
Maes-Y-Coed
Pontypridd
RCT
CF37 1EQ**

Date of inspection: March 2024

by

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

About Maes-Y-Coed Primary School

Name of provider	Maes-Y-Coed 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	282
Pupils of statutory school age	251
Number in nursery classes	31
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%)	15%
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%)	3.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	14%
Date of headteacher appointment	02/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	02/03/2015
Start date of inspection	04/03/2024

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

Nearly all pupils enjoy their time at Maes-Y-Coed Primary School. They develop high levels of respect for the staff who look after them and trust that they will always act in their best interests. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They engage positively with the wide range of interesting learning experiences and develop a strong sense of belonging to the school community. During their time at the school, most pupils make good progress from where they start. They develop a love of reading and speak with enthusiasm about their learning. They develop good mathematical and literacy skills, and often apply these well in their work across the curriculum. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Most are eager to do well and to take on new challenges. Pupils are beginning to develop useful skills that help them to reflect on their learning and to think about how they could improve their work. However, pupils do not generally have enough opportunities to engage in this important work.

Staff know the pupils, their needs and interests extremely well, they provide high levels of care, support and guidance that enable pupils to enjoy school and participate effectively in learning. They provide a broad and balanced curriculum that matches the ethos and aspirations of Curriculum for Wales. This is evident in work to explore ideas such as 'Cynefin'. These opportunities enable pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well. Teachers use a range of strategies, such as effective questioning techniques, to support pupils' understanding. Throughout the school, they plan valuable opportunities for learning through practical activities and exploration. For example, the well-considered provision for play enables pupils to develop their communication, personal, social and physical skills successfully.

The headteacher demonstrates thoughtful and considerate leadership. Over time she has created an effective team ethos amongst staff, which is built on positive relationships, trust and collaboration. She has brought out the best in the staff by encouraging and empowering them to make the best use of their skills and experience. This includes providing beneficial support for pupils and their families in the local community. School leaders address national priorities well. The school's interpretation of Curriculum for Wales is broad and authentic, additional learning needs (ALN) reform has been managed well and pupils' Welsh oracy skills are strong. Overall, school leaders keep the work of the school under close review and are aware of what they need to do to improve. Looking ahead, they recognise the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to direct their own learning. Across the school, expectations are high and there is a strong safeguarding culture.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the quality of feedback so that pupils understand and know how to move their learning forward
- R2 Provide more opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils enter the school with skills that are at or above those expected for their age. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and English as an additional language (EAL), make good and often strong progress from where they started.

Most pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well across the school and they are confident communicators. The youngest pupils engage positively in conversations with adults and pupils within their class and develop a range of suitable vocabulary. For example, when talking about their paintings, they can say how they mixed the colour grey to paint the Big Bad wolf. Many Year 2 pupils retell the story of Saint Dwywen in small groups with loud, clear voices while varying their intonation to engage listeners. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils have effective oracy skills. For instance, when debating, they speak with passion and conviction about whether the government should proceed with the banning of petrol and diesel cars by 2030 and give logical reasons for and against the case.

Many pupils make strong progress in their reading skills. Younger pupils quickly learn to recognise the sounds that different letters and combinations of letters make. By Year 2, most use their phonic knowledge well to read simple words accurately. They identify patterns in words and sounds and recognise and read familiar, everyday words successfully. A few pupils read fluently and with good expression. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read with fluency and a good awareness of their audience. They talk with enthusiasm about their favourite authors and books and display a genuine pleasure for reading.

Overall, most pupils' progress in writing is effective. Pupils in Nursery record their ideas through mark making and some are making good attempts at forming legible letters, while Reception pupils write familiar words successfully to form simple sentences. As they progress, most pupils use story maps purposefully to help them structure various forms of writing, such as diaries, to capture a story. Most pupils write well for a suitable range of purposes. They understand the different features needed for different styles of writing and reflect successfully on how well they have included these in their work. However, pupils do not write at length or edit and improve their written work often enough.

Nearly all pupils enjoy speaking Welsh. Most have a sound grasp of basic language patterns, appropriate to their age and prior learning. They show a good understanding of familiar Welsh phrases and respond appropriately to straightforward questions and instructions given by staff. Older pupils ask and answer questions

about topics such as their family, pets and the weather. By Year 6, most pupils use a wider variety of vocabulary and sentence patterns. For example, they use the past tense well to describe what they did on their holidays.

Nearly all pupils make strong progress with their mathematical and problem-solving skills. The youngest pupils have a sound grasp of number, count objects and write numbers up to twenty and count in tens to a hundred. A few are beginning to understand one more and one less. In Year 2, pupils use measuring jugs accurately to find out how many millilitres of water they need to add while 'cooking' in their mud kitchen outdoors. Older pupils develop a strong understanding of number and relationships, they link multiplication with division, and demonstrate rapid mental recall when solving tricky mathematical problems using fractions, decimals and percentages. A few of the oldest pupils achieve a particularly high level of understanding of mathematical concepts, for instance when calculating the area of the school grounds using their knowledge of formula to work out the areas of circles, triangles and irregular shapes accurately.

Nearly all pupils develop a full range of digital skills and use technology confidently to enhance their learning across the curriculum. In the younger classes, pupils create simple pictograms showing their favourite fruit after they had a tasting session. By Year 2, pupils can use basic coding skills to order a set of instructions correctly, so that the robot moves through the map of the local area. Older pupils use ICT naturally in their day-to-day learning, such as when collaborating digitally to share their opinions. Most have developed strong coding skills and confidently merge a range of skills to create successful multimedia documentaries on topics such as the Tonypandy Riots.

Most pupils across the school develop their physical and creative skills well. For example, the youngest pupils create symmetrical Rangoli patterns to celebrate the Hindu festival of Diwali, whilst older pupils learn to play and perform using a range of instruments, such as recorders and violins. Most pupils develop their balance, co-ordination, and spatial awareness skills whilst keeping fit and take part in a wide range of beneficial sports and physical activities.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils' exhibit high levels of well-being. They feel well cared for, safe and secure and know who to speak to if they are worried or upset. Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to reflect positively and maturely on their learning and welfare. The positive working relationship between staff and pupils enables most pupils to feel they are valued members of a thriving school community.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and is a strength of the school. They are extremely polite and respectful to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils are aware of school rules, they understand the reasons rules are in place and adhere to them successfully by following the 'Maes-Y-Coed Way' with pride. Nearly all pupils move around the school sensibly, settle in class quickly and are eager to learn. During lessons, most pupils listen attentively to each other and follow adults' instructions well. They talk with confidence about their work and interests and are keen to take part in a variety of experiences.

Nearly all pupils engage in their learning with enthusiasm and take pride in their achievements and the progress they make. As they move through the school, most pupils develop the attitudes and behaviours that help them to become successful independent learners. They are resilient, have a determination to do their best and are not afraid to make mistakes, such as when younger pupils build a variety of houses for the three little pigs to find out which is strongest and older pupils discuss 'if and why Science should be ethical'.

Most pupils approach new challenges confidently and are aware of the school's high expectations of effort to achieve success. They demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their work and engage fully in their lessons. Most respond well to the feedback they receive during lessons. However, feedback from staff does not always enable pupils to gain a clear understanding of how to deepen their learning and further improve their work.

Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. They have a strong awareness of how to stay safe online through the effective work of the school's digital learning group. For example, they know that they need to report inappropriate online behaviour to an adult and not to share passwords with others. Most pupils enjoy regular physical activities and participate in team sports against other local schools with enthusiasm. Most pupils' make sensible choices, for example to eat healthily and drink fresh water throughout the day. A majority of pupils across the school engage in a wide range of exciting after-school clubs eagerly, such as coding, card club and multi-sports.

Across the school, pupils have a secure understanding of their rights and contribute maturely to discussions about fairness and equality. Many engage in a range of leadership opportunities and take these roles seriously. They talk about their roles confidently and identify how their work has made a difference to the school. For example, the Anti Bullying Ambassadors lead on whole-school assemblies and give valuable advice and support to the peers. In addition, pupils are part of the school's curriculum teams and work alongside senior leaders and governors to support school improvement.

Most pupils develop high levels of empathy and show this through their entrepreneurial work. Through a range of exciting projects such as, 'Turn Honey into Money' pupils in Year 2 and 3 have made and sold products and decided to donate funds to charity. Older pupils helped to raise funds by organising a summer fayre 'Hwyl Yr Haf' to install a defibrillator in the local community. The wide variety of school visits and trips supports pupils understanding, engagement and motivation effectively. For example, younger pupils have visited Saint Fagan's and Rhondda Heritage Park. Older pupils can attend residential visits in Llangrannog and Llain where they learn to enhance their team building skills.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and establish clear and consistent routines that help pupils to feel settled and secure in class. Staff use praise and encouragement effectively to build positive working relationships. Pupils and staff consistently follow the 'Maes-Y-Coed way', which is based on kindness and respect.

The school has a broad and balanced curriculum which contains a good range of authentic learning experiences. Teachers plan systematically for all pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills progressively through a range of cross curricular themes. A rich and varied range of visits engages pupils well and enhances their learning. For example, Year 3 pupils visit Pontypridd Museum and take part in an intergenerational show and tell to develop links with the community. The school provides a good range of lunch and after-school clubs to enrich pupils' learning, such as coding, craft and choir.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh skills meets the needs of most pupils well. Most staff model Welsh phrases and sentences well to give praise, instructions or ask simple questions. Most pupils respond well to simple questions and use their Welsh language skills enthusiastically. The school provides meaningful opportunities to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. Pupils develop a strong sense of 'cynefin' and learn about the features of their locality. For example, older pupils learn about the life of Dic Penderyn and the Merthyr Rising.

Staff promote the regular use of pupils' ICT skills, and most pupils use their digital skills regularly and effectively in their learning. For example, older pupils enhance their topic work by creating multimedia presentations successfully to capture interest. Teachers ensure that pupils make good progress in developing and using their mathematics and numeracy skills in a variety of authentic contexts. For example, older pupils use their knowledge of area and perimeter to calculate the cost of materials required to resurface the playground. Although teachers provide many worthwhile experiences for pupils to develop their basic skills, in many classes across the school, staff do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to learn independently or lead their own learning.

Staff make effective use of the indoor areas of the school and there is a calm, purposeful and orderly learning environment. The school is well organised, and staff and pupils make good use of the different indoor spaces. Teachers make good use of the outdoor areas for younger pupils through a range of purposeful activities, for example making vegetable soup in the mud kitchen. However, in the older classes, staff miss valuable opportunities to use the outdoor areas to support specific skills or areas of learning.

Teachers use a wide range of assessments effectively to monitor and track pupils' progress over time. Regular pupil progress meetings enable teachers to identify pupils requiring additional support and plan for next steps in their learning. Staff give valuable verbal feedback to pupils during lessons that successfully corrects misconceptions and identifies what pupils do well. However, teachers do not always provide enough feedback that supports pupils to identify their next steps and improve their learning, for instance, to enhance their extended writing. Reports to parents contain appropriate information about the pupils' attitudes to learning and their experiences throughout the year. However, examples of what pupils can do to improve and information about the progression of pupils' skills are limited.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge. They set high expectations of pupils and provide clear explanations and instructions. Teachers use clear learning objectives for lessons, which they share with pupils. In the best examples, teachers co-construct success criteria with pupils, for example when identifying key features of

a persuasive text. Staff are good language role models. They use questioning effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and to deepen their understanding of key concepts. Across the school, teachers and support staff work successfully together when leading or supporting activities.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a nurturing environment that promotes respect and kindness amongst its pupils effectively. Positive relationships are a strong feature both between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. There is a calm working atmosphere where nearly all pupils behave well, are considerate of others and approach their learning positively. Pupils feel safe in school and know they can speak to an adult if they have any worries. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, and all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to pupils' safety and well-being.

Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about and understand diversity and other faiths. The well-being fortnight at the start of each term provides purposeful opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of respect, and to reflect on what is right or wrong. For example, older pupils explore and understand the features of positive relationships. Pupils have good opportunities to consider the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child and think about the rights and feelings of others.

The provision for pupils with ALN is a strength. As a result, most pupils with ALN make the expected level of progress from their starting points. The ALN co-ordinator, along with class teachers, ensures that there is effective identification and support for pupils with ALN and well-planned provision to meet their needs. The ALN co-ordinator has effective links within the local cluster of schools and works with a range of external agencies effectively. All pupils have useful one-page profiles, which contain valuable information including how they like to be supported and what makes them happy. Staff implement a range of effective intervention programmes to support pupils' learning. For example, focused reading and speech and language sessions enable pupils to progress in their literacy skills.

Staff provide a range of purposeful nurture programmes that support pupils' social and emotional needs successfully. Overall, staff develop a caring and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and valued.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn about the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. For example, older pupils link well with the local university to take part in sports events and learn about the risks of high cholesterol. The school promotes healthy lunches and snack well and most pupils have a good understanding of a healthy diet.

The school has robust strategies in place to promote good pupil attendance including regular communication with parents, daily monitoring and follow-up work that is ably supported by the Attendance Well-being Service when needed.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to consider ethical and environmental issues such as renewable energy. For example, older pupils relish fortnightly debates

on topical news and government policies. These conversations challenge their thinking. Pupils from across the school have purposeful opportunities to contribute to the school through a wide variety of leadership groups. For example, the Tech Team promote e-safety and support other pupils well with their digital skills.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, along with school leaders and the whole community, has effectively shaped and implemented a clear vision for the education and well-being of all pupils. Through highly effective and considerate leadership, the headteacher has gained the trust of all staff and established a caring culture, where pupils feel safe and secure and enjoy being at school.

Along with the very able senior leadership team, the headteacher facilitates a continuous focus on building and maintaining positive relationships, underpinned by a strong understanding of the needs of the pupils and community. All staff have a good understanding of the needs of individual pupils. There is a secure team ethos and a commitment to doing the best for all pupils. Leaders establish and maintain a strong safeguarding culture across the school.

Leaders distribute roles and responsibilities effectively and the staffing structure meets the school's needs well. There are worthwhile arrangements to build leadership capacity. For example, support staff are trusted with key responsibilities to support pupils' well-being and basic skills. Subsequently, the school has a depth of leadership at all levels.

The school's evaluation and improvement processes are mature and efficient. A strength of the school's approach is that all staff, and at times pupils, are involved in monitoring activities, and this enables them to feel part of the school improvement process. Leaders and staff identify relevant priorities and take suitable actions to bring about improvements. For example, after identifying mathematics as an area for improvement, leaders introduced a new, carefully selected mathematics programme that better addressed pupils' needs. Overall, leaders keep progress towards improvement priorities under review effectively. The confidence and capacity within the school's staff to act instinctively to adapt plans and improve practice is particularly effective. For example, staff have worked closely together to develop and deliver more authentic learning experiences for pupils and this impacts positively on their levels of interest and engagement.

Leaders link professional learning to staff performance management targets effectively. They ensure that staff access a wide range of professional learning opportunities. This includes encouraging teachers to engage in focused enquiries through 'lesson studies' aimed at improving teaching, provision and how best to meet the needs of pupils in their classes. Of note is the way leaders include pupils in these studies to provide valuable feedback to teachers about how they learn.

Leaders and staff develop close working partnerships with parents. Most parents believe that communication between home and school is effective, and trust that the school is doing the right thing for pupils and always acts in their best interests. Leaders are highly visible and on hand to welcome pupils and talk to parents at the beginning and end of the school day. Leaders welcome the views of parents. The

parent forum meets half termly and a few parents are part of the school's curriculum development teams. These opportunities provide leaders with useful ideas that help to influence school policy.

Work to address national priorities progresses well. In line with Welsh Government reforms, leaders have implemented changes to the provision for pupils with ALN successfully. The school is making good progress in implementing Curriculum for Wales and all staff have a good understanding of the design and planning process. As a result, staff prepare more authentic learning experiences for pupils. Leaders provide a useful range of measures to address the impact of poverty, such as the school uniform 'swap shop' and provide financial support when appropriate for pupils to experience trips and visits. In addition, leaders provide successful opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language and digital skills.

Governors support the school and the community it serves well. Alongside the headteacher they manage the school's finances prudently and use the pupil development grant well to tackle social disadvantage, for example to support vulnerable pupils with their emotional well-being and to provide equal access to the curriculum. They understand the school's improvement priorities and support leaders to monitor improvement work suitably. All governors are keen to learn and develop their roles and responsibilities to support the school more efficiently. They also place an appropriate emphasis on supporting staff and leaders' well-being. Governors make suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

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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Publication date: 09/05/2024