



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

A report on

**Aberdare Town C.I.W. Primary School
Wind Street
Aberdare
CF44 7HF**

Date of inspection: November 2018

by

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

About Aberdare Town C.I.W. Primary School

Aberdare Town Church in Wales Primary School is in Aberdare in Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. The school has 300 pupils, including 39 who attend the nursery on a part-time basis. The school has 10 classes, including 5 mixed-age classes and a nursery class.

The rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is 5%. This is well below the national average of 18%. The school identifies 13% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is below the national average of 21%. A very few pupils have statements of special educational needs. No pupils come from Welsh speaking homes and a very few pupils have English as an additional language.

The school's last inspection was in January 2013. The headteacher was appointed in September 2014.

Estyn does not inspect religious education or the religious content of collective worship when inspecting a school with a religious character. Instead, the governing body is required by law to arrange for religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

As they move through the school, almost all pupils make good progress in developing their skills, and around half make very good progress. Nearly all pupils behave very well. They apply themselves positively to their stimulating lessons and have a positive attitude to learning. They benefit well from the teaching of good quality that they receive. Most develop their personal and social skills to a high standard and show respect and concern for others.

The headteacher provides strong, effective leadership and the school has clear values and aims. The staff work well as a team. Governors support the school effectively. There are purposeful opportunities for parents to visit the school and to become aware of their children's learning. The school has effective systems to evaluate its own performance, to make improvements and to raise standards effectively. It has created a supportive learning environment that makes beneficial use of the varied spaces in the school.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards of spelling
- R2 Ensure pupils have opportunities to apply and to develop their numeracy skills in a variety of topics
- R3 Ensure pupils have opportunities to apply and develop their numeracy and data handling skills when using ICT as they progress through the school

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

As they move through the school, nearly all pupils make at least good progress and around half make very good progress by the end of key stage 2. Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress from their starting points.

In the foundation phase, most pupils listen attentively to adults and respond appropriately to questions. For example, in the nursery and reception classes, pupils join in well with adults in role-play areas when 'serving' them food in a tea party, or when building a bridge with blocks for the Three Billy Goats Gruff. Most pupils in the foundation phase develop their speaking skills well. They know their colours and describe their feelings well. Many pupils make their own choices and talk with interest about their activities. As they move through the foundation phase, most use their knowledge of sounds well to tackle unfamiliar words when learning to read. In Year 2, more able pupils read fluently and discuss characters and events and predict what might happen next in their books. Many pupils write successfully for various purposes, such as writing instructions or re-telling a Bible story. They use basic punctuation accurately to organise their work into simple sentences and they form letters correctly.

Most pupils in key stage 2 have good listening skills and speak confidently and clearly in class. For example, most pupils in the Year 5 and 6 class listen well to others when working in groups to research the lives of historical figures, such as Rosa Parks. They discuss effectively and report back to their class clearly. Most pupils in key stage 2 read extracts of text, or instructions, in lessons successfully to make progress with their work. Most pupils read fluently for their ages and the more able pupils read very well with good expression. Year 6 pupils demonstrate their enthusiasm about reading, for example, when talking about the books of David Walliams. Most pupils in key stage 2 write lists of facts and instructions in appropriate ways, describe science experiments, and label charts and illustrations in their books effectively. Most develop legible joined handwriting and write well for a wide range of purposes. Many plan the content of their writing for different purposes successfully and produce effective extended pieces, such as biographies or empathetic writing as characters from their class novel. Weaknesses in spelling and paragraphing prevent a few from achieving as well as they could in their writing.

In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils greet each other and adults confidently in Welsh. In Year 2, most pupils know their colours and numbers, they describe the weather and sing many traditional songs well. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 have positive attitudes to learning the language and most make good progress. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils answer questions about themselves, their friends and families using a suitable range of correct responses. They engage well in conversation to discuss their hobbies, likes and dislikes, and give simple reasons for their views and opinions. By Year 6, most pupils read texts appropriate to their age successfully and write with increasing fluency and accuracy using learnt patterns.

Throughout the school, most pupils develop their mathematical skills well. In the foundation phase, most learn to count correctly and apply their number skills

confidently in different areas of learning. For example, they show a secure understanding of fractions when dividing birthday cakes or pizzas into halves and quarters. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils use a suitable range of methods for calculations and use the four rules of number to solve problems successfully. Many pupils measure accurately and use number processes well to solve problems, for example in length and capacity. In science and topic work, pupils describe experiments and investigations appropriately. However, they do not apply their strong numeracy skills or calculate and apply numerical understanding enough in different contexts and situations across the curriculum.

Many pupils develop their skills in information and communications technology (ICT) suitably. In the foundation phase, most use tablet computers readily to record their activities with photographs and moving images. They use art and picture collage programs to experiment with colour confidently. Many pupils in Year 2 and key stage 2 become familiar with presentation software and media files. They frequently use quick response (QR) codes in their work to present various recordings or images to demonstrate their activities effectively. Most pupils develop their skills to research on the internet and extract images and information competently. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils use word processing packages confidently to re-draft, illustrate and present their written work. However, pupils' understanding of spreadsheets and the use of ICT to present data and findings from their various projects and experiments is underdeveloped.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils have a positive attitude and clear enthusiasm for learning. In classes throughout the school, almost all are attentive to their teachers and eager to succeed. In the foundation phase, most pupils develop their independence well as they move from one activity to another. In key stage 2, most pupils work together productively. They co-operate effectively when working in pairs or groups. For example, pupils in the Year 4 and 5 class, after first finding great challenge in developing the code breaking skills required to make progress in their mathematics topic, return to their work with determination the following day.

Standards of pupil behaviour are consistently good across the school. In lessons and at other times, they share spaces and equipment well. For example, during severe weather, when pupils have to stay indoors for sustained periods, they remain consistently good natured and sensitive to the needs of one another.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and they are confident that adults will listen to their concerns and deal with any problems that arise. Most parents speak positively of their children's enthusiasm for school. Levels of attendance are good throughout the school.

Nearly all pupils have a secure understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking exercise. In the foundation phase, pupils in Years 1 and 2 take responsibility for managing their snack table and know that their fruit and yoghurt tubes are healthy choices. They understand the need for a healthy, balanced diet. Pupils in key stage 2 talk knowledgeably about sensible food choices and what makes up a healthy lunch box. They are aware of the value of healthy snacks instead of sweets and describe their fruit 'Snack Shack', operated by pupils in key

stage 2, with enthusiasm. Throughout the school, most pupils know why it is important to have regular physical education (PE) lessons and to take exercise at break times. Take up of extra-curricular sport and dance activities is high.

Many pupils throughout the school take on roles of responsibility readily. They speak enthusiastically about the wide range of leadership roles available, including 'Cryw Cymraeg', digital leaders and playground ambassadors. Many pupils talk proudly of their school Senedd and explain correctly how pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 vote in members for various roles. They understand the benefits of each class being able to express their views through their elected representatives. They are pleased that their Senedd has campaigned for new equipment and 'Buddy Benches' for the playground. They believe that they can influence decisions made by staff that affect relevant aspects of their lives in school. In the foundation phase, pupils contribute to their rules for good behaviour. In Year 2, most participate well in making suggestions about how the next stages of their lessons should continue.

Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate a strong sense of fair play. By the end of key stage 2, through learning about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, most pupils develop a strong awareness of their own rights and how their own wellbeing and that of others might be supported. They understand that the rights of all young people are important and that everyone deserves an equal opportunity to succeed. In key stage 2, pupils learn about diversity and respect for different ways of life by studying novels set overseas, for example in Syria. Many pupils demonstrate this knowledge well in their writing based on the literature they read and when responding to news reports about refugees.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school offers a broad curriculum based on termly themes. This provides a purposeful range of interesting activities that engage pupils throughout the school effectively. Teachers provide a two-year cycle of topics and ensure that pupils do not experience any undue repetition of work in mixed-age classes. In key stage 2, teachers introduce new topics interestingly by using relevant visitors to the school or educational visits to stimulate and engage pupils' interest. For example, Year 6 pupils interviewed a visiting senior politician from Westminster and this promoted learning of high quality before their visit to the Senedd in Cardiff. Pupils in Year 4 visited a museum in Swansea to commence their studies on life in the Second World War.

Teachers in the foundation phase have created exciting learning environments indoors and outdoors. They make imaginative use of the school's varied range of spaces to encourage creative learning of high quality through play. For example, in the 'imagination station', pupils plan and role-play a birthday party for Dewi Dragon, write invitations and make cakes. This enables staff to deliver rich experiences and develops effective foundation phase learning from the nursery through to Year 2. There is a well-considered balance between tasks directed by the teacher and learning led by pupils. This supports many pupils to develop their confidence from their early days in the school successfully. In the foundation phase, pupils have a variety of opportunities to choose how they would like to learn. As a result, many develop their independent learning skills well.

Provision for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills is effective. Teachers plan well to ensure that pupils make strong progress. Members of the Criw Cymraeg encourage pupils successfully to use the language in informal situations, for example, by organising playground games. Teachers promote pupils' understanding of the culture and history of Wales well. For example, they provide opportunities for pupils to learn traditional tales, such as those in the Mabinogion and to visit local castles.

Throughout the school, teachers deploy learning support assistants effectively and all work together purposefully with teachers to enhance provision significantly. Working relationships between staff and pupils are supportive and productive. Pupils have many opportunities to shape and influence their learning.

Nearly all teachers plan lessons effectively, deliver them creatively at a suitable pace and enthuse pupils successfully. Across the school, teachers have a secure command of the topics and skills they teach. Most staff ask skilful questions and this promotes pupils' thinking well. In the foundation phase, teachers plan effectively to ensure that purposeful opportunities for teaching and practising numeracy and ICT skills occur in lessons. Teachers link lessons to previous learning well and exploit opportunities to develop pupils' skills and subject knowledge purposefully. However, as pupils move through the school, they do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their numeracy or their ICT skills throughout the curriculum.

Teachers nearly always explain the learning objectives carefully in lessons. The school uses an effective system ('Flight Path') to help pupils understand what they need to do to succeed. They must judge for themselves whether they are 'taxiing', 'taking off' or 'flying' in their learning. This requires them to self-assess their work, as well as each other's, before the teacher assesses it. Teachers use a simplified version to support pupils in the foundation phase. Staff use this approach consistently throughout the school. It is helping pupils to understand how well they are doing and the next steps required in their learning.

There is a suitable range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. These target pupils of different ages and enhance opportunities available for pupils successfully. For example, many pupils attend sports and dancing activities, the school choir and the computer coding club.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a nurturing community with a strong level of care and co-operation between staff, pupils and parents. The ethos of the school promotes successfully an inclusive environment where everyone shows each other mutual respect. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and provide effectively for their social and emotional needs and they develop their levels of wellbeing positively. Members of staff take care to give all pupils an equal opportunity to influence the life of the school.

Teachers operate effective procedures for tracking pupil performance and attainment throughout the school. Staff use their in-depth knowledge of individual pupils and their analysis of assessment information to plan lessons that meet pupils' learning needs successfully. Teachers target those with additional needs at an early stage

with effective intervention and support. The school has created a valuable 'vulnerability index' that it uses to assess all pupils and to identify any particular risks or challenges they face. Teachers use this tool well to assess individual needs and to enhance levels of support. They devise carefully structured education plans for individual pupils. These plans are clear and have measurable outcomes that parents, pupils and teachers review together regularly. This process is comprehensive and enables pupils to overcome barriers to their learning. Experienced learning support assistants use varied methods to help targeted pupils make appropriate progress. Support staff with specialist training provide sessions of high quality for pupils with identified social and emotional needs.

Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online and staff raise awareness and knowledge about e-safety effectively. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school provides many opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to learn about healthy lifestyles. For example, in the foundation phase, they study a balanced diet by labelling their drawings of a healthy meal. Pupils in key stage 2 organise provision of healthy snacks in school. The curriculum provides good opportunities for PE which staff supplement by organising purposeful extra-curricular physical activities.

The school has established its own Senedd which successfully creates a wide range of leadership roles for pupils. This has resulted in effective pupil initiatives to improve learning experiences and their learning environment. For example, pupils are currently involved in planning a new cycle of curriculum topics.

Staff work successfully to develop opportunities that promote positive attitudes to difference and diversity. The school has strong links with the community and engages in beneficial projects to develop values of respect and empathy among pupils. For example, the school involves pupils in visiting a local care home to spend time with adults experiencing illness. Staff also encourage pupils in lessons to reflect on the impact of war and the importance of racial tolerance in the context of the wider world. As a result, most pupils have a sound understanding of equality and their responsibilities as global citizens.

School assemblies provide pupils with good opportunities to come together as a community and promote positive social behaviour. They are structured well to include varied cultural activities such as singing in Welsh and listening to recordings of local musicians. Classes give performances of samba band routines learnt in music lessons. Throughout the school, assemblies include collective worship and provide valuable occasions for pupils to reflect on the decisions they make and their relationships with others.

Most parents speak positively about the school and agree that there is effective communication with them. They find the headteacher and staff accessible and helpful. The school has worked effectively to set up a range of parent workshops and information sessions. This gives families and carers opportunities to understand how to support their children and, in specialist sessions, to share approaches with other families. Health workers and other professionals also attend, providing valuable information to families. The school maintains strong links with the local authority and other professional support agencies.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides strong leadership and sets a clear strategic direction for developing the school. Her effective communication skills ensure that all staff, governors, parents and pupils understand and share her vision for securing school improvement. As a result, effective teamwork is a particular strength of the school community. The headteacher has managed recent changes to school staffing successfully. There is a well-defined leadership structure and the senior management team support the headteacher effectively. All members of staff are clear about their roles and carry out their responsibilities well. The headteacher models and promotes professional values and behaviours among staff that contribute positively to school improvement. Staff have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. The headteacher challenges staff appropriately to ensure provision of high quality and tackles underperformance rigorously.

The school has purposeful processes for evaluating its effectiveness. It uses learning walks, the analysis of information on pupil performance and scrutiny of pupils' books to gain information about the school's strengths and areas for development. School leaders use this information well. The school responds well to the views of parents, governors and pupils in order to identify areas for improvement and to take forward positive change, for example the recent changes to the school uniform and the creation of the faith garden suggested by pupils.

There is a clear link between the outcomes of the self-evaluation procedures and the school improvement plan. For example, the school has identified the need to enhance opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills. Teachers have created school improvement plans that use Welsh Government's digital competency initiatives to inform their teaching approaches for development of pupils' computer skills. This is at an early stage of development.

Leaders monitor and measure the impact of planned actions rigorously, particularly in relation to national priorities linked to literacy and numeracy. This enables the school to deliver improvements successfully. For example, it has enhanced foundation phase provision and improved outcomes in English and mathematics.

There are effective procedures to manage the performance of teachers and learning support assistants. All staff have access to a suitable range of relevant training to support their professional development, for example in relation to the delivery of targeted reading programmes. This links closely with the school's priorities for improvement. The school is an effective learning community. Teachers participate with their local partner schools to agree and standardise pupil assessments. Staff make visits to observe and develop good practice and work collaboratively to share effective teaching strategies. Action research projects and sharing good practice has had positive impact on pupil outcomes, for example in relation to the development of pupils' strong oracy skills.

The school manages its resources to meet the needs of pupils well. Leaders deploy staff efficiently, making the best use of their expertise and experience. Leaders are creative in making use of all indoor and outdoor spaces available. The headteacher and members of the governing body monitor the budget very carefully. They review regularly the impact of programmes and activities on pupil outcomes to ensure that they are cost effective. They allocate funding appropriately to address the school's priorities for improvement.

The school makes effective use of the pupil development grant, for example by developing the reading skills and wellbeing of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Most identified pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Members of the governing body are supportive of the school and know the community it serves well. The headteacher's detailed reports keep governors well informed about school developments and pupil progress. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, their participation in setting the school's strategic priorities for improvement is at an early stage of development.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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