



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

A report on

**Cefn Primary School
Greenfield Avenue
Glyncoch
Pontypridd
Rhondda Cynon Taff
CF37 3BD**

Date of inspection: September 2018

by

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

About Cefn Primary School

Cefn Primary School is in Glyncoch, north of Pontypridd in the Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. Currently there are 132 pupils on roll, including 12 pupils in the full-time nursery class. There are seven mixed-year classes. These include two local authority resourced classes for pupils with social and emotional needs and behavioural difficulties.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the past three years is just below 38%. This is well above the average for Wales of 18%. The school has identified around 46% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is considerably higher than the national average of 21%. A very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs or are in the care of the local authority. Nearly all pupils are white British and speak English at home. A very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school formed a federation with Craig yr Hesg Primary School in September 2012. The current executive headteacher for the federation and the head of school for Cefn Primary School took up their posts in January 2014. The school was last inspected in November 2014.

The school is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to take forward developments relating to educational reform in Wales.

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

At Cefn Primary School, most pupils feel safe and secure, and enjoy coming to school. Many are interested in their work, and behave well in and out of lessons. However, overall too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. From a low starting point, many pupils, including pupils with additional learning needs, make sound progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and information and communication (ICT) skills. However, pupils do not develop their writing skills or their ability to apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills well enough across the curriculum.

Teachers work well together to develop a consistent approach to lesson planning and classroom management. There is a worthwhile focus on developing pupils' social and emotional skills, and teaching them about healthy lifestyles. However, instability in staffing and leadership over the past few years has contributed to too much variability in the quality of teaching at Cefn Primary. As a result, pupils do not develop their skills systematically enough. Arrangements for grouping pupils in key stage 2 are not always successful in meeting the needs of pupils of lower ability and younger more able pupils.

School leaders have an inspiring vision to develop the school as a powerful professional learning community. However, the school's management processes are not strong enough to ensure that all aspects of its provision are effective.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Establish stable and effective leadership and teaching teams
- R2 Improve monitoring and school improvement processes to ensure they focus on raising standards for pupils
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching and ensure any grouping arrangements across classes enable pupils of all abilities to make effective progress
- R4 Raise standards in writing
- R5 Ensure all teachers give pupils appropriate opportunities to apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively across the curriculum
- R6 Improve pupils' attendance

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils start school with skills, especially speaking skills, that are below those expected for their age. As they move through school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress from their starting points. Most pupils in the learning resource classes progress appropriately, particularly in developing their literacy, numeracy and social skills in lessons.

Across the school, most pupils are eager to communicate with one another and with staff and visitors. Many make themselves understood effectively. In the reception class, more able pupils begin to develop their vocabulary well. For example, they use interesting adjectives to describe the 'shiny golden egg' that was left in the outdoor area by a mysterious visitor. Many older pupils in key stage 2 communicate effectively to describe business plans to one another during their group work. However, pupils' progress varies too much across the school and a few pupils do not develop their vocabulary well enough and struggle to express their thoughts and ideas clearly. Many pupils learn to listen well. However, a few pupils do not listen carefully enough and, at times, misunderstand instructions in lessons.

In the reception class, many pupils develop their initial approach to writing well. More able pupils are beginning to form recognisable letters and apply their phonic knowledge to write simple words, such as when they write a list of clues to help a police officer find the thief who stole Cinderella's shoes. In Year 2, many pupils write for a suitable range of purposes and more able pupils use a good range of descriptive language to retell a story. However, in general, pupils do not develop a strong enough understanding of spelling patterns. In key stage 2, pupils use language imaginatively, for example, when they describe a bridge as 'an extended insect leading into the crooked castle'. They understand the conventions of a few different genres appropriately, such as writing instructions and newspaper articles. However, they do not write for a sufficient range of purposes. Across the school, pupils' correct use of punctuation, such as capital letters and full stops, varies too much and their handwriting skills do not develop sufficiently. Many pupils do not write at length well enough.

Many nursery and reception pupils develop their initial approach to reading well. They know that letters have meaning, hold books appropriately and understand the conventions of stories. More able pupils in the reception class are beginning to read their work back appropriately. By Year 2, many pupils use their phonic knowledge appropriately to sound out words. More able pupils read with effective expression and enjoyment. Many pupils develop their reading skills well as they move through the school. In lower key stage 2, many pupils use decoding strategies effectively to read unfamiliar words with growing confidence. By Year 6, most pupils are enthusiastic readers. They read with good expression and understanding. They are confident about tackling unfamiliar words using their knowledge of letter sounds. They skim and scan text effectively, infer character traits from details in stories and deduce sensibly where the plot is heading.

Many pupils in the nursery and reception classes are beginning to develop appropriate mathematical skills. Reception class pupils use mathematical language naturally in their play, such as when they identify that some feet are 'too big' and others 'too little' using a foot gauge. More able pupils read the price of different types of shoe accurately and calculate the cost of two sets of shoes correctly. Many Year 1 and 2 pupils develop their understanding of number effectively. For example, most pupils identify number bonds to 10, many add and subtract 1 from numbers up to 20 and most understand tallying in the context of favourite fruit choices. However, too many pupils at the end of the foundation phase do not apply their understanding of number well enough to solve simple mathematical problems successfully. Many key stage 2 pupils make suitable progress in developing their number skills. For example, in Year 6, they multiply by 100 and 1000 accurately, and use their knowledge of multiplication confidently to work out how many ingredients they need to prepare food for different numbers of people. However, their ability to handle data is less well developed. Across the school, too few pupils practise and develop their numeracy skills regularly across the curriculum.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop appropriate ICT skills. For example, most use word processing skills competently to make pictures using a paint program. Most pupils use a mouse successfully and conduct simple searches on the internet to find information about animals of their choice. Most pupils build their ICT skills well as they move through key stage 2. For example, most pupils in Year 4 cut and paste pictures into text and begin to use a spreadsheet to store information and save their work successfully into folders. By Year 6, most pupils create presentations confidently using appropriate programs, and make movies using a green screen. They search for information confidently, such as when they find out the cost of ingredients on a supermarket website. However, their ability to model information and to communicate through email are less well developed.

Across the school, many pupils develop their thinking skills appropriately. For example, pupils in Year 6 use their thinking skills well to work out different methods for solving a numerical problem, such as the cost of 3 bowls at £1.29 each. In the foundation phase, younger pupils make sensible suggestions about who could have stolen Cinderella's shoes.

By Year 2, many pupils are enthusiastic about learning Welsh. They enjoy having a go at using the language and respond effectively to simple instructions given in Welsh. They answer simple questions and use a variety of responses, including 'dw i'n grac!' to say how they feel. In general, pupils make suitable progress as they move through the school. By Year 6, many pupils give extended answers to questions with a little prompting. More able pupils read appropriate Welsh texts with suitable fluency and answer simple comprehension questions. They have an appropriate understanding of the advantages of being bilingual. However, too few pupils use Welsh words and phrases regularly outside of designated Welsh lessons.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils feel safe and secure, and enjoy coming to school. They know where to go to if they have a problem and they are confident that staff will respond sensitively to their worries and concerns. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. Older pupils give sensible examples of how this works in practice, such as never telling someone your address when online.

Most pupils understand which food and drink they should choose to help them stay healthy, and older pupils speak appreciatively about the healthy choices available to them in their school canteen. Most pupils make the most of opportunities to be active during the day, both in the regular physical education lessons and on the spacious playground at break times. However, there are no opportunities for them to develop these positive attitudes further during extra-curricular activities. Most pupils are punctual at the start of the school day. However, too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough.

Many pupils are keen to take on responsibilities, for example through the eco council, the school council or as play leaders or fruit monitors. Through these roles, they are beginning to understand that they can make a difference to the school community. For example, playground monitors help to resolve small disputes between younger pupils, and members of the eco-council have provided litterbins to help keep the school grounds and classrooms tidy. However, there is an inconsistent approach to deciding on membership of the various pupil-led groups and this limits the full engagement of all pupils.

Many pupils show interest in their work and want to do well. When engaged actively in their learning, they persevere successfully at the tasks set. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 work productively to plan and to deliver their 'Caffi Cymraeg' project. However, a few pupils lack confidence and are less able to persevere or to seek help when they face difficulties in their work. In a minority of classes, pupils work independently and they are beginning to direct their own learning. This is particularly evident in the reception class, where most pupils settle quickly to work productively on a variety of engaging tasks both indoors and outside. However, pupils do not work independently enough in too many classes.

Most pupils are ready to learn at the start of the lesson and are eager to succeed. They expect to work together as part of the learning process and a majority co-operate appropriately to develop their learning in small groups and pairs. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 practise asking each other questions in Welsh, such as 'Beth s'yn bod?' Across the school, many pupils listen to one another with respect and they respond appropriately to the contribution of others. A few more able pupils in key stage 2 collaborate together effectively, such as when deciding on the different steps to follow to make a parachute. Many pupils behave well in lessons and during lunch and breaks. Most are considerate and respectful towards other pupils and adults. However, a few pupils across the school do not listen well enough and do not engage effectively in all activities. This slows the pace of learning in a minority of classes.

Most pupils in the resource classes are learning to manage their behaviour appropriately and they relate well to other staff and pupils. They show interest in their work, enjoy their activities and are beginning to take more responsibility for their actions. Younger pupils understand their targets for improvement thoroughly. This helps them to focus effectively and begin to monitor their own progress successfully.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Across the school, most teachers develop effective working relationships with pupils. They use an effective range of strategies consistently to manage pupils' behaviour

and they create a productive atmosphere for teaching and learning. Most teachers are reflective practitioners. They are willing to try out new approaches to support pupils' learning more effectively. There is a consistent approach to planning lessons which includes setting out clear objectives and conducting purposeful reviews at the end of lessons to clarify and reinforce pupils' learning. However, the school's current arrangements for grouping pupils do not meet their individual needs well enough. For example, on a few occasions, tasks are too challenging for less able pupils and staff do not always intervene effectively to ensure these pupils make progress. Overall, the quality of teaching varies too much from class to class.

In the minority of classes where teaching is strong, teachers have high expectations. There is a suitable pace to lessons and teachers use inspiring 'hooks' to draw pupils into tasks. For example, a crime scene set up in the outdoor area of the reception class immediately captures pupils' interest and leads to many effective learning experiences that develop pupils' language and thinking skills well. Teachers ensure that activities are relevant and engaging, and they give pupils genuine opportunities to work independently. For example, planning and organising a 'Caffi Cymraeg' provides a real context for pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 to practise and consolidate a wide range of skills, including working together collaboratively to make 'crempog' for customers to enjoy.

Where teaching is less effective, activities are not sufficiently engaging and they rely too heavily on direct input from the teacher. Occasionally, teachers' expectations do not match pupils' stage of development well enough. For example, in a few lessons, pupils do not have strong enough speaking or reading skills to be able to tackle the learning activities set for them, and this limits the progress they make.

In a minority of classes, teachers provide verbal feedback of good quality that helps pupils reflect on their learning and to move forward. However, the quality of written and oral feedback varies too much across the school and teachers' assessments for the past year at the end of both phases are not sufficiently accurate or reliable.

The reception class provides foundation phase learning experiences of good quality that include purposeful opportunities for pupils to make choices and to work purposefully and independently both indoors and outside. However, too few pupils in the foundation phase receive regular opportunities to learn through active involvement and through activities that they choose for themselves. Opportunities for pupils to develop their skills regularly and purposefully in the outdoors varies too much between classes.

Pupils across the school benefit from worthwhile opportunities to extend their learning outside the classroom. For example, during a recent visit to Cardiff, older key stage 2 pupils visited the Welsh Assembly building, where they appreciated the 'wooden mushroom' structure as well as developing their sense of belonging to the Welsh nation effectively. A few older pupils visit Oxford University and this helps to raise their aspirations of studying at world-leading universities.

Increasingly, teachers work collaboratively across the federation, using an agreed planning format. This is beginning to establish a consistent approach to teaching. In general, planning ensures that pupils have relevant learning experiences. The school has incorporated the literacy and numeracy framework suitably into its plans

and staff are beginning to consider the digital competency framework appropriately. However, overall, there are insufficient opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills systematically in a broad range of tasks across the curriculum. Teachers have not provided enough opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in science or their extended writing skills to a high enough standard. An over-reliance on worksheets, particularly in pupils' topic books, means that pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to express their ideas freely or to write at length.

Across the school, pupils have appropriate opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills in lessons. The majority of teachers use the language throughout the day to give simple commands and instructions. Activities such as the 'Helpwr Heddiw' and the 'Cryw Cymraeg' encourage pupils to use a suitable range of simple greetings and phrases regularly. However, overall, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise and consolidate their Welsh language skills throughout the school day. Through trips and visits, and activities such as the school eisteddfod, pupils have worthwhile opportunities to learn about their Welsh heritage, history and culture.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. Staff help pupils to understand what food to include in a healthy lunchbox, and pupils from Year 6 run a fruit tuckshop at morning break. The school promotes exercise appropriately within the school day and there is a good range of resources to encourage pupils to be active at break times. Staff develop pupils' understanding of right and wrong effectively through consistently high expectations in relation to behaviour and the recently introduced reward system for good behaviour. The school encourages pupils to think about their values and beliefs appropriately through informative displays and topic work. However, the school does not always provide pupils with a daily act of worship or regular opportunities for quiet reflection. This limits their opportunities for spiritual development.

The school's personal and social education programme is thorough and links well to curriculum plans in other subjects. Teachers monitor the delivery of the programme carefully to ensure that it has a positive impact on pupils' social and emotional development, and their understanding of issues such as staying safe online. The school has recently reviewed its support for its most vulnerable pupils. It has introduced and revisited specific interventions and these are beginning to improve pupils' confidence and their attitudes to learning successfully. The school ensures that staff receive appropriate training to deliver the interventions, and they work effectively with pupils.

There are useful opportunities for pupils to learn about becoming active citizens through involvement in pupil-led groups, such as the school council, eco-committee and playground leaders. This helps to develop pupils' confidence and their sense of responsibility well. Pupils have a few worthwhile opportunities to become aware of issues in the wider world, such as when they raise money as part of Red Nose Day.

The school has productive relationships with parents and communicates with them effectively. For example, a recently introduced electronic reward system notifies parents immediately so that they can share in their child's success. Parents are

confident to approach the school with any issues that may affect their child's learning and wellbeing. There is appropriate communication with parents of children with additional learning needs.

The school tracks and monitors pupils' progress and wellbeing appropriately as they move through the school. It uses performance information competently to identify how well individual pupils are progressing over the year and to provide appropriate additional support where required. However, it does not always monitor the progress and development of specific groups of pupils well enough to ensure that they make the best progress, including pupils eligible for free school meals. The school identifies pupils with persistently poor attendance and engages appropriately with families. However, there is insufficient focus on other pupils with low attendance and very few incentives currently in school to encourage pupils or parents to improve attendance levels further.

The school supports pupils with additional learning needs appropriately through its targeted intervention programmes. It works effectively with outside agencies when needed, including the educational psychologist. The federation has identified that targets in pupils' individual plans are not specific enough and, as a result, leaders have put in place suitable support to improve the quality of the plans. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this work.

The provision for younger pupils in the learning resource base is effective. Staff provide sensitive and well-structured support in a caring environment. This meets pupils' social and emotional needs particularly well. There has been an unsettled period with regard to staffing in the learning resource base for older pupils, and this has led to weaknesses in the systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress. However, the current day-to-day provision supports most pupils' social and emotional needs appropriately. Staff ensure that pupils from both classes integrate well into the school community, which has a positive effect on their wellbeing.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The executive headteacher, together with the heads of the two schools, have established a clear vision for the federation that focuses appropriately on meeting the wellbeing and educational needs of pupils and developing the professional learning of staff. They have communicated this vision successfully among staff and governors. The executive headteacher leads on strategic matters across the federation and the heads of the two schools lead at an operational level in each school. Members of staff generally have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. However, over the last year, the federation has faced a challenging period in terms of staff absence, and this has contributed to less effective leadership practices.

Governors are supportive of the work of the federation, and have high aspirations for making it a flagship learning institution. Governors have link roles to monitor the four priority areas for improvement within the school development plan. They visit the two schools regularly and undertake joint observations with staff. As a result, they have

an increasing understanding of many of the school's strengths and a few of its areas for development. However, governors' roles in challenging leaders about pupil progress over time is limited.

The federation has developed a clear structure for improvement planning, based on four priority areas and leaders develop detailed action plans to support them in achieving their targets. These action plans form the basis of the school improvement plan and set out appropriately the staff responsible, a sensible timeline, key evidence, resource implications and the name of the link governor. However, the success criteria generally focus too much on leadership and provision, rather than on pupil outcomes.

Leaders have created a strong culture and ethos to support the professional learning of all staff. For example, the training provided to support staff in using strategies to develop pupils' emotional wellbeing and their reading skills have proved effective in building pupils' self-confidence and improving their work. There are suitable arrangements to support the active engagement of all staff in increasing their professional knowledge, understanding and skills, based on action research. However, many of the strategies leaders encourage focus too heavily on high-level research without enough evaluation of their impact on pupils' outcomes and wellbeing within the federation.

During the last few years, a significant number of key members of staff have undertaken secondments or been released from the school for variable periods in order to support other schools and initial teacher education programmes. Leaders have not always considered the impact of this on the remaining staff and pupils, particularly at times when there are staffing issues within the school. This instability across the federation during the last academic year has also tended to undermine the school's ability to maintain high standards and provision that is consistently good or better. Current processes for monitoring progress are too complex and do not inform improvement action plans well enough.

Leaders manage the school's resources effectively and spending decisions support the school's targets for improvement appropriately. Recently, leaders and governors have reviewed the skills and experience of staff across the federation. As a result, leaders have moved staff between the two schools to strengthen the quality of teaching and middle leadership of the federation as a whole. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing. In general, leaders make suitable use of the pupil development grant to support vulnerable pupils appropriately.

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:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

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

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Publication date: 26/11/2018