



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

A report on

**Garnteg Primary School
Hillcrest
Garndiffaith
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 7SJ**

Date of inspection: March 2019

by

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

About Garnteg Primary School

Garnteg Primary school is in Garndiffaith in Pontypool in the Torfaen local authority. Following the closure of Victoria Primary School in July 2018, the school received an additional 164 pupils in September 2018. As a result, the school now has 448 pupils aged from 3 to 11, including 60 pupils who attend the nursery on a part-time basis.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is approximately 38%. This is well above the average for Wales (18%). The school has identified 36% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is well above the national average of 21%. Nineteen pupils are in the care of the local authority. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity and come from homes where English is the main language. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

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

The headteacher took up her post in February 2010. The previous inspection of Garnteg Primary School was in May 2015 and the previous inspection of Victoria Primary School was in May 2014.

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

Garnteg Primary School is an effective learning community. Nearly all pupils are happy and confident individuals with a high level of enthusiasm for learning. Nearly all make very strong progress in developing a wide range of skills that they use positively across the curriculum. By the time they leave the school, the standard of pupils' oracy and numeracy skills is particularly high.

Pupils' behaviour is very good and, from a young age, they show excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils have a very effective voice in the school, both in planning the curriculum and making changes to their learning environments. The curriculum is exciting and teachers deliver it through stimulating learning experiences.

There is very strong, considerate leadership throughout the school. The headteacher has high expectations of all staff and pupils, and leads by example. Teachers lead important aspects of the school's development very well. The school reviews its performance continually and highly effectively. Staff are outward looking, share their best practice well and are keen to engage and learn from schools.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teaching challenges all pupils at an appropriately high level and develops their independent learning skills effectively
- R2 Improve the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils to enable all pupils to improve their work successfully

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to school reorganisation and the transition of a large number of pupils into the school as a result of the closure of a neighbouring school.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. By the end of key stage 2, they achieve well. Most vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs make good and at times very good progress from their starting points.

Pupils in the foundation phase make strong progress in developing their speaking, listening and communication skills. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils have developed into articulate learners who are confident when talking with other pupils and adults. Most pupils listen courteously to each other and adults, for example when younger pupils are talking about making sandwiches for Paddington Bear and when older pupils debate the effects of racism on individuals.

Many pupils enjoy reading. In the foundation phase, they use their knowledge of letter sounds well to build unfamiliar words to read simple texts. Their reading develops with fluency and accuracy as they move through the school. Most pupils understand why reading is an important life skill. They can explain the main points of the stories they read and talk confidently about their favourite authors. By the end of key stage 2, more able pupils use punctuation effectively to aid their expression when reading a science fiction novel.

While in the foundation phase, most pupils improve their basic literacy skills well. For example, pupils in Year 1 write stories and messages to their friends. Most pupils write in a suitable range of genres, such as letters, poems and instructions. Throughout key stage 2, most pupils maintain this strong progress and use these skills to write well-structured extended writing. For example, in Year 6, pupils write interesting accounts about Rosa Parks and the quest for racial equality in America. Across the school, most pupils persevere well in developing a neat and legible handwriting script and the high quality of pupils' presentation of their written work is a strength of the school. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils can spell common words correctly and make good attempts at more difficult words.

Many pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. In the foundation phase, they respond to adults' routine requests appropriately. By Year 4, they begin to talk in simple sentences, sometimes using the past tense. They use their basic Welsh skills to write postcards about places they have visited. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils make suitable progress in Welsh oracy, reading and writing. In Year 6, pupils write short descriptions of their friends using learnt vocabulary and language patterns. Across the school, many pupils use their Welsh language skills appropriately outside of their designated Welsh lessons.

Across the foundation phase, most pupils develop their number skills appropriately and acquire mathematical skills systematically. Most pupils understand and use the concepts of time, measure and money well and apply this knowledge eagerly in real-life contexts, for instance, when Year 2 pupils use real money in their own gift shop to purchase Mother's Day gifts. As pupils progress through the school, they develop their skills in using written calculations across the curriculum well. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 use their numeracy skills to solve a range of problems

effectively, such as when they collect and represent data as part of their coastal schools project. In Year 6, pupils apply their number skills well to solve problems to arrange seating in a café, using algebra. As a result, most pupils' reasoning skills are developing well.

Most pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good across the school. In the foundation phase, most pupils use word-processing and simple paint programmes to create pictures and to add text, changing the colours and font size with growing independence. In Year 2, many pupils create interesting stories about explorers using a story app and most pupils can give clear instructions to program an object to move and to follow a route. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 understand e-safety well. Most search for information online effectively and use a range of programs confidently to present their findings. They use an online software platform successfully to enrich learning experiences across the school and most have a good knowledge and understanding of databases and spreadsheets.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils enjoy school and are very proud of their learning, progress and achievements. Their zeal and enthusiasm for learning is very strong. They are extremely courteous and welcoming towards visitors, staff and other pupils. Nearly all pupils are keen and very confident when talking to other pupils and adults and they relish the opportunity to share their learning and their new learning environment with visitors to the school. Standards of behaviour of nearly all pupils in lessons and around the school are exemplary.

Nearly all pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of keeping healthy by eating and drinking sensibly and by participating in physical activities. For example, pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 make regular use of the challenging climbing tower in the school grounds. Many pupils take advantage of the fruit tuck shop that the pupils organise at break times and of the comprehensive range of after-school clubs, including netball, football, school band and drama. Through participating in these valuable opportunities, pupils enhance their wellbeing, social skills and self-confidence well.

Across the school, many pupils take on an extensive range of leadership roles through pupil voice groups. For example, the school ambassadors and sparkle spies play a very important role in working alongside teachers when evaluating the quality of learning across the school. They produce action plans alongside leaders to support school improvement. The school ambassadors also deliver assemblies to inform pupils of their rights and complete special missions set by the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Nearly all pupils take their leadership roles and responsibilities very seriously and contribute positively to school improvement. For example, the school council organised activities to involve pupils in anti-bullying week and introduced a healthy living tally chart to encourage greater use of the tuck shop. Pupil voice has a high priority in the school and the choice of additional clubs run by the school is a direct result of a pupil vote. Pupils have a strong voice in their learning. Across the school, pupils express their opinions confidently about what topics they would like to learn and how they would like to learn them. As a result, pupils are highly motivated, interested and engaged in their learning.

Almost all pupils can communicate their opinions in a purposeful and positive manner. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils can discuss, with passion, their views on topics such as apartheid, racism and the need for equality. They have an excellent understanding of the school's values of fairness, equality and tolerance. Through these activities, they are developing positive attitudes and becoming ethically informed citizens.

When in class, nearly all pupils settle quickly to task and listen respectfully to adults and each other. This continues beyond lessons to other areas of the school, resulting in a calm and friendly atmosphere. Pupils show a very strong commitment towards their learning. Nearly all pupils engage very purposefully with opportunities to work independently and with others in small groups and as a whole class. When discussing their writing and role-play, Year 5 pupils talk animatedly about Rosa Parks, the Suffragettes and the issues around racial and gender equality. Through this work, pupils develop a strong understanding of how history influences the present.

Nearly all pupils are able to discuss their work in depth work, for example when discussing their reports on space, focusing on the use of the robot, Insight, which NASA sent into space to gather data. Nearly all pupils show resilience and confidence when tackling learning tasks and they can explain how they use the working walls to support them to move their learning forward.

Most pupils are confident learners. In the foundation phase, most pupils maintain focus for considerable periods when learning indoors and outdoors. Older pupils in Year 5 for example, work with enthusiasm and independence to research and construct fashions based on research from historical sources. Nearly all pupils' levels of concentration are excellent when working as individuals or collaboratively. Most pupils are punctual in the mornings and school attendance is consistently high when compared with levels in other similar schools.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school fosters a calm and courteous learning environment where pupils show mutual respect towards others. All staff manage pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school very effectively. Teaching assistants provide a very high standard of pastoral and learning support for individuals and groups of pupils.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum that stimulates and engages most learners well. Staff work well together to provide a range of learning experiences of good quality. They consult with pupils purposefully about what and how they want to learn. This creates a productive classroom environment. Long-term planning over a two-year cycle focuses well on the new areas of learning and experiences. Staff track the coverage of literacy and numeracy skills carefully.

Nearly all teachers plan learning activities that have clear objectives and build upon pupils' prior knowledge and skills well. They have high expectations for pupils' presentation and handwriting. In most classes, teachers provide positive learning activities at a pace that enables many pupils to develop their skills successfully. In these classes, teachers provide appropriate challenges for all learners, but this is inconsistent in other classes and varies too much across the school.

Most teachers have strong knowledge of the subjects they teach and use this well to engage their pupils. They give appropriate verbal feedback to pupils that encourages them to work hard and to persevere. However, a few staff do not always provide written feedback that enables all pupils to improve their learning.

Staff plan a wide range of educational visits to enhance pupils' learning experiences and they make good use of the local environment and community in pupils' work. For example, Year 6 pupils use ICT to hold a question-and-answer session with their member of parliament to develop a recycling project within their local community.

Teachers consider the national frameworks for literacy, numeracy and digital competence well when planning pupils' learning. Teachers track and assess skills carefully and ensure they take part fully in the process. As a result, pupils are able to develop their skills in a suitable range of contexts across the curriculum.

The consistent application of the foundation phase principles provides good opportunities for younger pupils to develop a wide range of skills. Teachers plan a variety of adult-directed tasks as well as activities that pupils choose for themselves. These activities enable pupils to practise and embed their literacy and numeracy skills well. Teachers plan learning opportunities skilfully that reflect real-life situations in authentic contexts. Pupils across the school have regular and purposeful access to outdoor areas that staff have developed creatively. For example, pupils use the forest school and school wetland areas on a regular basis to deepen and extend their learning.

Teachers have a systematic approach to developing pupils' Welsh skills across the school. For instance, every class learns Welsh daily and this enables pupils to practise speaking Welsh regularly in class. Most pupils respond appropriately to commands and directions in Welsh that teachers use in formal situations. Overall, teachers provide many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their oral skills in Welsh outside of designated Welsh lessons.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school's extensive provision for the care, support and guidance of pupils is highly effective. The provision for pupils with additional needs and those who are vulnerable is widespread and tailored well to meet the needs of individual pupils. For example, the school's considered approach to providing for the most vulnerable pupils' emotional needs is embedded in nearly all classrooms, as well as being used highly effectively in withdrawal groups and individual support sessions. Teaching assistants work conscientiously within the classrooms to aid pupils' learning. They are also highly efficient in implementing a wide range of effective and appropriate intervention programmes. As a result nearly all pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills well. This enables these pupils to make good and at times very good progress.

The school has extremely effective procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing. Staff have robust arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and achievement, and teachers moderate and standardise their assessments rigorously. This information is systematic and leads to highly effective pastoral support and purposeful whole-school improvement. The school's raising attainment group (RAG) ensures that pupils make strong progress towards their learning targets. It monitors all provision and its work feeds directly into effective school self-evaluation processes.

Communication with parents and carers is excellent and this fosters very productive relationships that help to maximise support for pupils. The weekly newsletter to parents and governors and the school's website are very informative and effective. The school has effective arrangements for reporting on pupils' progress. The school's provision to ensure parents and carers develop the capacity to support their children's learning and progress is a strong feature. For example, the regular family learning sessions, run by the additional learning needs co-ordinator, includes drop-in sessions for parents to access free training that develops their employability and caring skills very well.

The senior leadership team tracks pupils' attendance carefully. The robust systems to improve attendance include working effectively with the Family First officer and the local authority. The school has taken an active lead in developing the cluster's attendance policy and has shared their best practice with other schools. As a result, school attendance is consistently high when compared to other similar schools.

The school's provision for transition ensures that pupils feel confident and prepared for the next stage of their learning. Teachers ensure that the curriculum promotes the positive benefits of a healthy lifestyle. The school has a highly effective curriculum for developing pupils' personal and social skills. The introduction of activities that include physical literacy, the daily mile and mindfulness in all classes has resulted in excellent provision that nurtures pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

The school ensures that nearly all groups of pupils, including those who are eligible for free school meals, have leadership responsibilities. There is excellent provision to ensure that pupils become active and ethically informed citizens who can make well-informed life choices. For example, Year 6 pupils debate current affairs, such as Brexit, and participate in live video conference calls with their local member of parliament in Westminster. The school develops pupils' spiritual and cultural attitudes well. Staff arrange a wide variety of opportunities for pupils to reflect in collective worship sessions, often led by pupils, based on festivals or stories from different religions or the school's values.

The school offers a wide variety of highly stimulating learning opportunities for all pupils, both within school and outside of school hours. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities for all ages is a notable feature of the school. Clubs include choir, band, climbing and drama. The provision of a television recording studio enables all pupils to develop their creative and editorial skills to very good effect. For example, pupils film concerts and special events and they interview visitors and create video clips to show to the whole school. These opportunities raise pupils' aspirations and enhance their self-esteem and wellbeing to a high level.

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

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher provides highly effective leadership and has a clear vision for the school. She sets high professional standards and expectations that she communicates very effectively to all staff and pupils. Across the school, there is close teamwork among staff, a shared sense of purpose and a strong commitment to high professional standards.

Senior leaders are effective and have a good balance of knowledge, skills and experience. They work very effectively to implement the priorities set out in the school development plan and to ensure continuous improvement. Members of the senior leadership team encourage staff well and provide very effective support and guidance to them.

Leaders and managers at all levels showed great skill in transitioning more than 164 pupils and nine new staff across all year groups, into the existing school. They displayed a high level of strategic planning allied to a strong caring ethos. Thoughtful and precise planning has allowed the whole school community to adjust quickly to the change. This has ensured that all newcomers settled quickly into their new surroundings and have made good progress during a challenging period.

The headteacher distributes leadership roles effectively among staff at all levels. The grouping of staff, governors and pupils into curriculum teams that reflect the new areas of learning has led to the successful creation of a personalised whole-school curriculum. Pupils plan themes alongside the staff and together they ensure that learning includes relevant and purposeful real-life experiences.

Members of the governing body are committed and supportive of the work of the school. They have a very good knowledge of the strengths and areas in need of improvement. Their role in evaluating the work of the school is developing well. For example, governors conduct learning walks with the pupils and comment on standards in numeracy across the curriculum. The headteacher and senior leaders keep governors well informed about developments and pupils' progress. The governing body meets regularly and take an active part in strategic decision-making, offering effective challenge to leaders, for example regarding staffing, finance and the purchase of resources.

Staff analyse performance data rigorously and use the findings well to inform future planning and pupil groupings. Pupil targets reflect the high expectations of staff and the school has a very good record in raising the achievement of nearly all pupils. Target-setting processes are robust and accurate. The raising attainment group (RAG) is highly effective in ensuring that tracking of pupils' progress against their individual targets is regular and systematic. Consequently, nearly all pupils make good or better progress across the school from the foundation phase into key stage 2.

The school has a systematic timetable for monitoring its effectiveness and uses a suitable range of evidence to evaluate its work, such as lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' books. Staff make very good use of this information to identify a relevant set of improvement priorities. The school's improvement plan sets out relevant and measurable actions clearly. A very valuable extra component of the school's self-evaluation arrangements is linking with leaders from other schools. This has provided a valuable addition to the school's existing self-evaluation procedures and has added to the objectivity within the process. It has been extremely helpful in moderating and confirming the school's own judgements about its strengths and areas for development.

The school gives staff very many opportunities to develop professionally. For example, the introduction of mindfulness for all staff and pupils has had a positive impact on their levels of wellbeing. Performance management procedures are robust

and the school addresses any training needs identified promptly. As a curriculum pioneer school, staff have embraced school-to-school working and work highly effectively with a range of partners to improve their own practice and to share examples of effective practice with others. For example, close cluster working with the Abersychan and Croesyceiliog clusters has resulted in a number of successful initiatives, including a numeracy project for pupils who are more able to develop their financial literacy skills.

Leaders use resources highly effectively to enhance the learning environments, to enrich the curriculum and to raise pupils' standards. For example, external grants secured by governors have led to significant improvements to the school, including the provision of a school climbing tower, a fully-equipped television and recording studio and an extensive forest school and wetland area. These resources have had a positive impact on pupil outcomes and on pupils' attendance and wellbeing.

The school uses the pupil development grant successfully for a wide range of activities that benefit targeted pupils. This includes financial support for music tuition and the employment of teaching assistants to support specific initiatives and intervention groups. As a result, nearly all targeted pupils achieve well. Expenditure links appropriately with priorities in the school improvement plan, and the governing body monitors expenditure carefully to ensure the school provides resources, teaching and learning of high quality.

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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