



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

A report on
Graig-Y-Rhacca Primary and Nursery Community School
Addison Way
Machen
CF83 8WW

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by

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

About Graig-Y-Rhacca Primary and Nursery Community School

Graig-Y-Rhacca Primary and Nursery Community School is in Machen in Caerphilly local authority. There are 172 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11, including 20 nursery pupils who attend full-time. There are six mixed-aged classes at the school including the nursery class.

About 57% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average of 18%. The school identifies around 25% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is above the national average of 21%. Around 5% of pupils come from an ethnic minority background and around 3% have English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up her post in February 2017. The school's previous inspection was in September 2011.

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

Pupils at Graig-Y-Rhacca Primary and Nursery Community school make good progress, particularly in developing their oracy skills. Standards of pupils' wellbeing are high and pupils enjoy coming to school and appreciate what the school has to offer. Staff provide pupils with an extremely high standard of care and anticipate their needs well. There is an exceptionally warm and caring atmosphere in the school and this helps all pupils to feel valued. Teachers provide interesting learning experiences and enhance these well through trips, visits and engagement with the local community. They support individual pupils well to reach their potential.

The headteacher provides the school with very strong leadership and engages the whole school community positively in improving the school. Leaders monitor and evaluate the school's work robustly and all staff and governors work well together to bring about the necessary improvements.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that pupils use a wide range of reading strategies to improve their reading
- R2 Improve spelling, handwriting and presentation across the school
- R3 Ensure that the teaching of religious education meets requirements

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 how it develops ambitious learners in a disadvantaged community, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Many pupils start school with knowledge and skills well below the level expected for their age. During their time at the school, they make strong progress in developing their skills across the curriculum, particularly in the development of their oracy skills. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress towards their individual targets. More able pupils often make very good progress.

Across the school, most pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well. Many pupils start school with a limited vocabulary, but they make good progress in developing their confidence in speaking and extending their vocabulary as they move through the school. When planning a story, for example, pupils in Year 3 consider carefully the vocabulary they use and explain why they use 'drizzled' instead of 'poured'. In Year 5, pupils describe how they use personification in their literacy work providing clear examples of this literary technique.

Pupils in the nursery class enjoy sharing books with an adult and other pupils and talk about the pictures. In reception, they understand that books tell stories and talk about a story they have enjoyed in detail. As they progress through the foundation phase and key stage 2, pupils generally develop their reading skills well. However, a few pupils rely too heavily on sounding out new words and do not use a range of strategies well enough to help them to decode unfamiliar words and to read with understanding. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils read fluently with expression. They discuss their reading preferences in detail and use higher order reading skills well to extract information quickly and make inferences and deductions about characters and plot.

In the foundation phase, many pupils show an enthusiasm for writing and younger pupils use a wide range of writing tools well to develop their early writing skills. For example, they use large chalks in the outdoor area to draw a route for the pedalled vehicles to follow. As they move through the phase, most pupils develop their writing skills successfully. They begin to produce pieces of extended writing, make careful choices about words and begin to use simple punctuation accurately. Most pupils hold their pencils correctly, but a majority do not produce neat writing of an even size. In key stage 2, pupils build well on these early writing skills and progress accelerates. Many older pupils write imaginatively making thoughtful and adventurous choices about the vocabulary that they use. For example, in Year 6 a pupil writes, 'Crossing the heath – normally deserted – we encountered three ugly, old hags'. Most pupils use punctuation accurately, but a minority do not write neatly or take enough care in the presentation of their work.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills as they move through the school. In the foundation phase, most pupils respond to instructions given in Welsh with understanding. Older foundation phase pupils know and use a range of simple language patterns and participate in simple conversations with an adult. As they progress through the school, pupils' build on the patterns they know and extend their answers to questions. By the end of key stage 2, many give reasonably detailed responses using the present and past tenses. Pupils do not generally use Welsh outside of Welsh lessons.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils make good progress in developing their numeracy skills across the areas of learning. They apply the mathematics they have learnt in lessons to solve problems with confidence. For example, in Year 2 they follow a set of mathematical clues to find hidden fruit in the forest area. Most pupils in key stage 2 have well developed numeracy skills. They apply these confidently when solving problems in mathematics lessons and in subjects across the curriculum. For example, they calculate the actual cost of cures for ailments in Tudor times and work out what the profit would be for the physicians when treating Henry VIII's gout. Many pupils explain their mathematical thinking accurately when performing calculations.

Most pupils made good progress in developing their skills in information and communications technology (ICT). By the end of foundation phase, nearly all pupils use a suitable range of programs and applications confidently on a range of devices. They access files and use ICT to record their self-assessment and peer assessments verbally. In key stage 2, most pupils have well developed ICT skills that they use to aid and enhance their work across the curriculum. For example, older pupils compose protest songs in the style of Bob Dylan and record these, using quick response codes to enable others to access them.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Pupils display a positive attitude to learning and participate in activities with enthusiasm. Nearly all pupils feel valued and special and this contributes to their obvious enjoyment of school. All pupils are proud of their school and most are keen to share their accomplishments and experiences. Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and when moving around the school. They treat each other and adults with respect.

In lessons, nearly all pupils settle quickly and move between tasks sensibly and efficiently. They work co-operatively in pairs and groups and they support each other effectively in class. Younger pupils are beginning to give appropriate oral feedback to each other about how to improve their work and they establish this practice effectively by the end of key stage 2.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. An outstanding feature of the school is that pupils feel they can approach any member of staff with confidence and know that they will take their concerns seriously and act upon them. Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep safe online. For example, pupils in Year 3 explain how it is important not to share their passwords and personal information online and not to accept 'friend' requests from people they do not know. They explain what sort of action to take if they are concerned about an issue online.

Most pupils have a good understanding of how to live a healthy life. They understand why it is important to exercise and enjoy participating in the 'daily mile' Older pupils discuss the importance of a healthy diet maturely.

Pupils have an extremely strong voice within the school and their various committees have an important role in promoting this. Committees make suggestions for improvement and their ideas are respected and implemented. Many pupils readily take on leadership roles in a wide variety of pupil-led groups. For example, pupils were instrumental in choosing the new school badge and creating the motto 'dream, believe, achieve'.

Most pupils concentrate well and tackle new work enthusiastically. They use a range of effective self-help strategies, before asking an adult for support. Most older pupils are highly considerate when listening to the views of others and share their own thoughts and ideas confidently. Nearly all pupils relate well to each other. For example, pupils in Year 4 and 5 support and advise each other about how to present themselves best on video recordings.

Most pupils show resilience when faced with problems and challenges. For example, pupils in the foundation phase construct models patiently and deal well with frustrations when they have to change their designs. Other pupils work hard to improve their jumping and landing skills in gymnastics. They are keen to improve each time and take inspiration from video clips of Olympic gymnasts. Nearly all pupils show a keen interest in class work and stay on task for sustained periods.

Most pupils understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Across the school, teachers plan imaginative activities to engage pupils in learning and stimulate their interest. For example, teachers present pupils with a scenario where a rocket crashes in the school grounds and pupils in reception and Year 1 have to help to find some of the missing aliens by providing others with detailed descriptions of them. This stimulates excited and thoughtful discussion about the features of aliens and develops pupils' oracy and writing skills successfully.

Adults question pupils skilfully to extend their understanding and knowledge. Nearly all teachers and support staff are good language role models and use every opportunity to develop pupils' oral skills. Generally, learning moves with appropriate pace and activities provide a suitable level of challenge for pupils of all abilities. All staff develop extremely positive and supportive working relationships with pupils and have effective strategies to manage their behaviour.

Most teachers provide pupils with purposeful feedback during activities that helps them to improve their work. In the foundation phase, they take time to model speech and writing so that pupils know exactly what they need to do and improve their work accordingly. In key stage 2, they help pupils to identify suitable targets in literacy and numeracy that focus their attention on important aspects of their work that need improving.

From nursery, adults encourage pupils to reflect on their work and to self-assess how well they have completed it using an age appropriate system linked to book characters. As pupils move through the school, they develop effective skills of looking at their own work and that of others critically to identify areas for improvement. Older pupils value the feedback from their classmates, and this helps them to be more reflective about their own work. As a result, by the time they leave the school, many pupils are confident and capable learners.

Teachers reflect on the effectiveness of the curriculum regularly and take good account of developments towards the new curriculum for Wales when designing the school's own curriculum. They involve pupils well in curriculum planning. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning because of the key role that they play in the planning

process. Teachers use pupils' ideas to plan interesting activities that meet the requirements of the national curriculum and develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills progressively. However, teachers' planning does not meet the requirements for teaching religious education well enough.

Staff take good account of the philosophy of the foundation phase and make creative use of the indoor and outdoor environments when planning and delivering activities. This fosters pupils' independent learning skills from an early age successfully.

Across the school, staff make good use of the inviting and well-resourced outdoor environment to enhance learning. They use the forest school and allotment area well to enrich pupils' learning and to develop their understanding of sustainability.

Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' Welsh language skills progressively as they move through the school. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. For example, pupils study aspects of a different part of Wales when they look at the geography of the Brecon Beacons. They worked with a local artist to produce landscapes of the beacons that they displayed for parents.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is an inclusive community, which values, respects and nurtures all of its members very successfully. There is a culture of outstanding care, ambition, equality and pride. This results in pupils who display remarkable respect towards each other, and become active members of the school family. An exceptional feature is the way the school integrates personal and social education into every aspect of its life.

Staff use highly effective procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing thoroughly. They provide extensive support for pupils with additional learning needs and those who are more able and talented. Staff identify any pupils who need additional support or challenge quickly and arrange appropriate and timely interventions. There are regular reviews of pupils' individual education plans, which are of high quality and reflect pupils' needs well. These reviews also recognise and celebrate pupils' success in achieving targets. Staff target interventions to meet pupils' needs extremely accurately and they evaluate these programmes rigorously to measure their impact. Consequently, nearly all pupils make good or better progress towards their individual targets. The school works closely with a variety of external agencies to provide effective support for pupils.

Staff employ a range of beneficial strategies to engage effectively with parents. They provide valuable workshops, for instance about the school's approach to teaching reading, to help parents support their children's learning at home. Staff offer high-quality individualised guidance to parents where their children have needs that are more complex. School leaders value parents' views and gather their opinions on aspects of the school's work. For example, because of feedback from parents, the school has changed the day that teachers issue homework and provides a homework club where parents and grandparents can work with their children, supported by staff.

Leaders ensure that parents have full access to school life. For example, staff and governors provide a crèche so that parents with younger children can be involved in

assemblies and arranges subsidised transport to enable parents to see their children perform in outside venues. The school also plays an exceptional role in the life of the local community and the community plays an active part in the life of the school. This means that the school is highly respected as a learning organisation, as well as a place to seek and receive support.

The school has effective systems to improve attendance and punctuality and the recent appointment of a family liaison is having a positive impact on attendance and punctuality.

Staff provide an excellent variety of opportunities for pupils to perform creatively, both in the local community and beyond. A highly effective example of pupils' participation is the opportunity for older pupils to perform Macbeth in the 'Shakespeare School's Festival' at a local theatre. This provides a unique opportunity for pupils to feel a sense of pride and achievement, demonstrating skills in teamwork, oracy, dance, public speaking and performance.

The school promotes pupils' moral and social development very successfully. Through studying different cultures, pupils have valuable opportunities to develop their understanding of the wider world and respect for diversity.

A wide range of enriching learning experiences nurtures pupils' cultural understanding. The school provides many good quality opportunities for pupils to experience life outside the school environment and is passionate about preparing them to be ambitious, positive and active citizens. For example, older pupils write and perform protest songs in the local community about homelessness. School assemblies promote pupils' spiritual development effectively. Pupils participate actively, listen carefully to the messages and act upon them.

The school has appropriate procedures to promote healthy eating and drinking and leading an active life. It provides a wide variety of curriculum activities and after school clubs, which contribute very successfully towards developing pupils' wellbeing and fitness. For example, the school has recently introduced yoga and the daily mile for pupils, enabling them to focus on healthy bodies in contrasting ways.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher is a strong leader and leads by example. She has a clear vision for the school. All staff, governors, parents and pupils share this vision. It promotes very high standards of wellbeing and improving pupils' outcomes by raising expectations of what they can achieve. In a short time, she has had a positive impact on the school. For example, parents feel confident about approaching the school and are more engaged in school life.

The roles of senior leaders are clear and effective in supporting the school to achieve its aims. For example, each leader is responsible for areas of the school improvement plan. The headteacher has high expectations of staff and regular staff meetings consider important issues, such as the analysis and discussion of pupil performance. Leaders track the progress of all pupils rigorously and work well with staff to ensure that pupils make good progress.

Governors make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. They have a sound understanding of the school's priorities and challenge the school effectively to improve important aspects of its work, for example in relation to improvements in pupils' wellbeing. They receive informative reports of school performance and priorities from the headteacher and staff. The governors use this information well to check on the school's progress in implementing its strategic priorities and to make sure that the school is spending its money effectively. For example, they ensure that the school makes good use of the pupil development grant to meet the needs and raise standards of vulnerable pupils effectively.

The school has successful processes to evaluate its performance and to plan for improvement. Staff, pupils, parents and governors contribute effectively to the self-evaluation process and identify areas for improvement. For example, following evaluation, staff offer parents workshops about the school's approach to teaching mathematics and internet safety. Leaders have introduced rigorous processes to monitor provision and the standards pupils achieve. They address underperformance robustly and identify specific areas that require improvement, for example improving oracy throughout the school. They implement change successfully and keep the impact of these changes under review. Leaders allocate responsibilities appropriately and identify the resources needed to deliver these changes well.

The school is successful in meeting national and local priorities. For example, leaders have a clear focus on improving attendance, in raising standards of numeracy and literacy in English and Welsh and in reducing the impact of poverty on pupils' outcomes and are continually improving these areas.

Leaders deploy staff well and make very good use of their specific expertise to support learning and wellbeing. For example, trained learning assistants support vulnerable pupils with specific emotional and behavioural problems successfully. Leaders ensure valuable opportunities for the continuous professional development of teachers and assistants. Staff support each other well and share effective practice regularly. A good example of this is the coaching and mentoring of staff by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Staff also have good opportunities to visit schools to view and share best practice. This has improved standards of teaching and learning and provision throughout the school. Performance management objectives target whole-school requirements well. They focus appropriately on raising pupils' standards and the professional needs of all the staff. For example, they include in-house training for staff on guided reading and strategies to improve emotional wellbeing and behaviour.

The school uses its resources well. It is a welcoming and safe environment with spacious and well-decorated classrooms and communal areas. The indoor environment provides a very attractive, calming yet stimulating place for pupils to learn and pupils have access to plenty of good quality resources including books and ICT equipment. The outdoor learning environment is spacious and well organised with direct access to outdoor learning for foundation phase pupils. Governors and leaders monitor spending regularly to ensure that the school uses its finances effectively to raise standards.

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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