



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

A report on

**Rhigos Primary School
Heol y Graig
Rhigos
Aberdare
RCT
CF44 9YY**

Date of inspection: February 2019

by

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

About Rhigos Primary School

Rhigos Primary School is in Rhigos, near Hirwaun in the Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. There are around 70 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11. There are three mixed-age classes in the school.

The rolling average for the past three years shows that about 32% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The current proportion is 45%. This is well above the national average of 19%. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity. No pupils speak Welsh at home, and a very few have English as an additional language. The school identifies around 27% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is higher than the national average of 21%.

The headteacher took up her post in January 2018. The school's last inspection was in November 2012.

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 are proud of the school's place at the heart of the community. It provides a warm, family-like ethos where staff care for pupils well. Pupils are happy, safe and well behaved. They support one another well in lessons and at play. Nearly all work hard in lessons, make good progress and achieve well as they move through the school.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and engaging. It meets the needs of all pupils and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Staff know their pupils well and track their progress carefully to ensure that pupils of all abilities make strong progress. School leaders have a clear vision for the future of the school. They set appropriately high expectations for pupils and staff. Leaders manage the school's finances efficiently. There is a good stock of books, equipment and other resources to meet the needs of all pupils.

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 Give pupils in key stage 2 more opportunities to make independent choices and decisions about how to apply their literacy and numeracy skills within lessons
- R2 Develop pupils' speaking and listening skills in Welsh in key stage 2
- R3 Provide further opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to use their extended writing skills across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils develop well as attentive listeners. In each class, pupils pay attention to their teachers, and older pupils listen carefully to the views of others. They accept that others may have different ideas from theirs, and they negotiate differences of opinion maturely.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make rapid progress in developing their grasp of letters and sounds to read simple words easily and to break down more complex words. They use context and picture cues well to aid their understanding of the text. Many pupils follow the meaning of their stories and make sensible predictions as to possible outcomes. In key stage 2, many pupils read aloud clearly and confidently. They read widely and enjoy speaking about their preferences. Older pupils are developing higher-order reading skills to a suitable level.

Many pupils in the early years make strong progress in learning to write. They develop mark-making skills progressively and write their names legibly. In the foundation phase, most pupils write neatly, composing sentences with capital letters and full stops correctly. They write for a suitable range of purposes. For example, they recount their visit to Mumbles lifeboat station, and retell the tale of Rama and Sita with a good level of detail. Most pupils' spelling is generally accurate or a close approximation. Many pupils in Year 2 display developing thinking and decision-making skills. For example, they rank various emergency services in order of importance with sound reasons for their choices.

In key stage 2, many pupils write with an increasing awareness of their intended audience, adjusting their style to match their purpose. For example, they write a knowing parody in which three little pigs build houses out of brick, metal and carbon fibre. They use imaginative vocabulary well to write interesting descriptions of a landscape, setting the scene for an imaginative story. In science, they write well-ordered descriptions of an investigation into the viscosity of various liquids, using sub-headings effectively. However, few pupils write at length in areas of the curriculum other than English.

Throughout the school, many pupils make strong progress in developing mathematical skills. In the foundation phase, they add and multiply competently when solving problems about the RNLI. They read and write numbers in words and figures and match them to Roman numerals. They sort irregular two-dimensional shapes and name regular polygons correctly. Many use their numeracy skills well when investigating friction produced by different surfaces and when measuring and weighing.

In key stage 2, many pupils make good progress in mathematics. They order and convert decimal fractions, identify factors and multiples within fractions and plot co-ordinates in four quadrants. More able pupils begin to use logarithms in their calculations. Despite their strong ability in mathematics, few pupils apply their skills across the curriculum at an equivalent level due to the undemanding nature of many of the tasks, such as drawing bar graphs to show how quickly different coloured chocolates melt.

Most pupils develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) well as they progress from one class to the next. In the nursery and reception class, nearly all pupils use tablet computers and other devices confidently, showing good independence. For example, they control miniature robots well and open and save their own work when producing images for St Dwynwen's Day. Many pupils in key stage 2 use a range of hardware and software to communicate their ideas effectively, to present and handle data and to model different possibilities. For example, when planning a river expedition, they create a spreadsheet that enables them to adjust levels of equipment within their budget.

Nearly all pupils have a positive attitude towards the Welsh language and are eager to speak Welsh in classes and when at play. In the foundation phase, many acquire a relevant vocabulary and practise questions and answers about familiar situations. In key stage 2, many pupils write well in Welsh, for example writing amusing dialogues. They hold simple conversations with one another. However, very few pupils are able to deviate from the scripts they have practised in class or to speak confidently on a broader range of familiar topics.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils are polite, friendly and supportive of one another. The pupils generally feel safe and well cared for. They know where to turn if they are worried or upset and they are confident that adults will deal with their concerns promptly. Nearly all pupils behave well in classes and around the school. Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Many have high aspirations for the future and understand why success in school is important. They are developing well as resilient, independent learners and contribute to decisions about the contents of each term's topic. They work hard and maintain concentration well, avoiding distractions and persevering when faced with challenges. However, pupils in upper key stage 2 do not routinely make individual choices and decisions about how to approach their work.

Nearly all pupils understand the principles that underpin healthy lifestyles. They can explain why it is important to include fruit and vegetables in a healthy diet and to limit their intake of sugary sweets and drinks. Most have positive attitudes to exercise in physical education lessons, on the playground and in after-school clubs, such as rugby, football and hockey. Nearly pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online, and discuss confidently why they need to keep their private details confidential.

The voice of pupils is strong within the school. There are several groups of pupils that influence the life and work of the school. Due to the relatively small numbers of pupils in the school, a few pupils serve on more than one committee. They value their leadership roles in the Cwriw Cymraeg, the eco-committee and the school council. Members of the school council regularly attend and contribute to governors' meetings, for example when reporting back on how they have helped to reformulate the school rules.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

All staff have highly effective working relationships with pupils, and this helps to foster a love for learning among the pupils. Staff question pupils effectively to ensure that nearly all pupils use their literacy and thinking skills regularly. They give pupils plenty of opportunities to express their opinions.

Teachers manage their classrooms effectively and they promote good behaviour that encourages all pupils to stay on task in lessons. Teachers ensure that lessons have suitable pace and they design classroom tasks that engage pupils well and match their abilities skilfully. Staff have appropriately high expectations of pupils. Teachers plan worthwhile experiences for all pupils and include them effectively in the process of choosing aspects of their learning. For example, pupils participate in immersion days that inspire pupils to want to learn more. However, once a topic is underway, pupils have fewer opportunities within lessons to choose how to approach their tasks.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Staff have established the principles of the foundation phase highly successfully in the early years class. Teachers provide a purposeful range of interesting topics that help pupils to learn and to build their knowledge, understanding and skills successfully. Teachers understand individual pupil's needs well. They use assessment information shrewdly to plan suitably for the next steps in pupils' learning.

All teachers plan successfully for the development of pupils' ICT, literacy and numeracy skills through a suitable range of worthwhile learning experiences. Staff give pupils effective opportunities to use their reading skills across other areas of learning. For example, in topic work linked to the Second World War, pupils' research provided many details about the Swansea blitz. Teachers plan comprehensively to ensure that pupils develop their writing skills progressively across a range of genres. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to draft their own work and use to extend writing skills across the curriculum.

The provision of the development of pupils' Welsh language skills across the school is developing well. The school plans purposeful Welsh language activities that link well to pupils' daily routines. Teachers reinforce vocabulary and language patterns successfully. However, in key stage 2, staff do not always take full advantage of opportunities to develop pupils' oracy skills inside and outside of the classroom.

Teachers have begun to provide an appropriate range of opportunities for pupils to set their own targets for improvement and to evaluate their own work and that of other pupils. but this work is at an early stage of development overall. Teachers give pupils valuable oral feedback on the quality of their work during lessons and they give pupils suitable time to reflect on their own and others' work. Staff write effective comments on pupils' work that helps them to identify areas for improvement and these are beginning to help pupils to understand how to improve their work appropriately.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has a happy, caring and inclusive ethos, where everyone is respected and valued. This contributes effectively to the good standards of behaviour and the positive attitudes that pupils show towards their learning.

Arrangements promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well. All staff place a clear emphasis on respecting equality and diversity successfully, promoting core values during circle time and acts of collective worship. There is a strong focus on developing appropriate values, for example through the active promotion of a 'value of the month'.

A successful range of activities, events and visits develops pupils' cultural development well. For example, pupil participation in a joint project facilitated by the Arts Council of Wales, 'Our Mountain', highlights pupils' sense of community and heritage. Pupils also participate in the school eisteddfod and this promotes a strong awareness of Welsh culture. Regular visits from local clergy support pupils' spiritual development appropriately.

Senior leaders have implemented effective and robust procedures for tracking pupils' progress and achievement successfully. They use assessment outcomes effectively to identify individuals and groups of pupils who require support. Support staff work successfully with colleagues to support the needs of individual learners. For example, there are well-considered and suitable intervention groups to support the literacy and numeracy development of selected pupils. For example, a structured programme allows reluctant readers to catch up with other pupils.

All staff are active in developing productive relationships with parents and the wider community. The school promotes an open-door policy and facilitates helpful meetings with parents on a formal and informal basis. Nearly all parents value the opportunity to engage in dialogue with relevant staff about their child's progress. The school gives parents worthwhile information about school life and events, including regular newsletters and social media updates.

Teachers write informative reports for parents that reflect individual pupil's progress accurately. Nearly all parents attend informative parents' evenings and they benefit from regular discussions about their child's progress in school. When appropriate, parents contribute helpfully to producing individual education plans. This helps parents to understand their children's targets and the ways they can support their progress towards their individual goals.

The school provides appropriate experiences that promote pupils' healthy lifestyles and highlight the importance of taking regular exercise. There is a variety of extra-curricular activities and sports clubs, which contribute successfully towards developing pupils' health and fitness. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to take vigorous exercise and for older pupils to take part in residential visits that enhance their social, physical and personal development.

The school provides developing opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. There is an active eco club, a school council and Criw Cymraeg. This results in pupils having a strong sense of pride and ownership of their school.

Provision for pupils with additional emotional and social needs is effective. The recently introduced emotional literacy group has already had a positive impact on raising pupils' self-esteem and, as a result, they show improved levels of confidence and engagement in their learning. The school liaises productively with external agencies to enable key staff to support the specific needs of individual pupils.

There are very good opportunities to ensure that all pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, regular and comprehensive e-safety lessons ensure that pupils know how to stay safe online. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which she communicates effectively to pupils, staff, governors and parents. She has high expectations of pupils' progress and behaviour. She received effective support from the deputy headteacher who contributes well to purposeful strategic planning. Together, they have driven forward significant improvement in the school, for example through effective initiatives to improve the performance of vulnerable pupils. The headteacher creates a strong team ethos in which all staff play an important role in ensuring that initiatives improve pupils' performance and wellbeing. For example, the leader responsible for the development of Welsh has ensured that valuable improvements have taken place in the quality of pupils' written Welsh. The headteacher distributes roles and responsibilities purposefully. Staff understand their leadership duties well and undertake them effectively.

Governors know the strengths and areas for development in the school well and they have played a key role in improving the safety of the school site. They monitor the school's finances carefully. As a result, finances have remained stable despite a high turnover of staff in recent years. Governors have begun to take part in learning walks and book scrutiny, but this is a recent development and the impact of the governors on pupils' standards is limited. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities appropriately.

The school uses effective procedures to find out how well pupils are doing. In particular, leaders and other staff listen to learners, look at their books and visit classrooms to gather useful first-hand information. The findings from these activities feed through to an honest and clear evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders use the findings well to inform the school improvement plan. This includes appropriate timescales, staff responsibilities, actions and training needs. Over the last year, the school has a strong track record in making improvements to teaching and the learning environment. For example, staff have developed a purposeful outdoor learning area for nursery and reception pupils.

Leaders support the professional learning of all teachers and teaching assistants well. Staff share expertise readily with one another. For example, the deputy headteacher is training teaching assistants in the development of skills in ICT so that they can use newly-purchased equipment effectively. Staff work well with other schools to develop their professional practice. For example, staff learned from another school in the consortium how to teach oracy more effectively by modelling sentence starters to pupils.

The school uses its resources effectively. It makes good use of the buildings and spacious grounds to create a purposeful learning environment. Leaders spend wisely to promote teaching and learning of good quality. For example, the school purchased some practical number apparatus that has made the understanding of number much easier for pupils. The school uses the pupil development grant effectively to ensure that targeted pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy.

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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