Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Cwm Primary School
Canning Street
Cwm
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 7RD

Date of inspection: December 2019

by

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

About Cwm Primary School

Cwm Primary School is in the village of Cwm in Blaenau Gwent local authority. There are 211 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11 years, including 22 nursery pupils. There are nine classes, including the nursery class.

Over the past three years, around 24% of pupils are eligible to free school meals. This figure is above the Welsh average of 18%.

The school identifies about 16% of pupils as having special educational needs. This is below the average for primary schools in Wales (21%). Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

Very few pupils have English as an additional language. There are no pupils who speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up post in May 2011. The school's last inspection was in October 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

Cwm Primary School plays a key role at the heart of its community. Staff place great importance on the happiness of pupils and recognise that all pupils need to feel safe, secure and valued in order to be able to learn and make progress. As a result, standards of wellbeing in the school are very high.

Teachers and teaching assistants deliver learning activities that engage pupils and encourage them to want to learn. They integrate aspects of Welsh culture and local history well. Staff use the Welsh language frequently and encourage its use among pupils effectively. As a result, standards in Welsh are a particular strength.

The headteacher sets a clear vision for the school based around pupil wellbeing. She works with other leaders, teachers and teaching assistant in a series of teams that encourage all to develop their leadership skills and contribute to school improvement. The school works well with other providers to improve the quality of its provision and share its strengths.

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 Ensure that pupils in the foundation phase have meaningful opportunities to develop as independent learners

R2 Ensure that teachers match activities to the needs of pupils of all abilities, particularly the least able

R3 Improve the quality of presentation, spelling and punctuation in key stage 2

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 intergenerational community work, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Around half of pupils begin school with literacy, numeracy and social skills below those expected for their age. Nearly all pupils make good progress in these skills over time and a minority make better than expected progress. The development of pupils' personal and social skills is a particular strength. Most pupils with special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals make good progress over time.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop effective listening skills. For example, reception pupils listen carefully to the class teacher's instructions before beginning their carousel of activities. Many pupils speak with confidence to other pupils and when contributing to class discussions. Most build well on these skills in key stage 2, and, by Year 6, many pupils speak with developing clarity to staff and visitors.

Most pupils develop an effective knowledge of letter sounds at an early stage. This helps them to make quick progress with their reading skills. By Year 2, they read basic texts fluently and with understanding, paying good attention to punctuation. For example, they recognise speech marks and add expression to their voice when reading what a character says. By Year 6, most pupils express preferences around favourite authors, use the blurb to help them choose a book and understand the features of different types of fiction and non-fiction texts. A few are beginning to develop higher order reading skills and use inference and deduction to predict what may happen next in a story.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop effective writing skills. They develop quickly the ability to write neat, well-formed letters and use their phonic knowledge well to construct simple words. By Year 1, they write informative short passages, such as when explaining how they carried out an experiment about the properties of different materials. In key stage 2, most pupils continue to improve their knowledge of a good range of fiction and non-fiction forms of writing. For example, pupils in Year 5 create imaginative leaflets to advertise a dinosaur theme park using engaging language, such as, 'immerse yourself in this amazing VR room!' However, in too many cases in key stage 2, the quality of handwriting and presentation is inconsistent and pupils make basic errors in spelling and punctuation. This sometimes distracts from the overall good quality of the content of their writing.

In the foundation phase most pupils develop a good range of mathematical skills. For example, in Year 2 they use their ability to count to 100 to measure swords in centimetres as part of their castle project. They have good recall of number bonds to 10 and transfer these into counting in 10s to 100. They double and halve numbers to 20 confidently and understand simple fractions, such as halves and quarters. Most pupils in key stage 2 use their numeracy skills successfully. They handle data accurately and present it in various forms purposefully. For example, they use line graphs correctly to identify the most effective insulating material to keep tea warm. Older pupils use their understanding of money and the four rules of number successfully to work out the best option to buy group readers for their class.

Most pupils make very strong progress in developing their Welsh oracy skills within Welsh lessons and through class routines. Many are eager to practise these with visitors and around the school. By Year 2, many use suitable phrases regularly in everyday situations. For example, they recall the days of the week and describe the weather for the day. Many read simple texts with understanding and write a sequence of sentences correctly, such as to describe themselves. In key stage 2, many pupils ask questions and respond appropriately when discussing favourite activities and their families, with teachers, each other and visitors. Many pupils' reading and writing skills in Welsh are developing appropriately. Older pupils state that they enjoy speaking Welsh and they believe it is important to be bilingual.

Most pupils develop effective information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In foundation phase, pupils use programmable toys, tablets and interactive whiteboards well. For example, reception pupils write simple instructions to guide a toy robot around a model town. Most pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 use databases and spreadsheets skilfully to create and find records and calculate totals using basic formulae. For example, Year 6 pupils collaborate to create a database on countries of the world. Older pupils' keyboard skills are strong, for example they use keyboard short cuts to carry out actions to edit work. They log in successfully, access and save work to a variety of online platforms, including Hwb. Many also access these at home or in the local library.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils behave well in class and when moving around the school. They listen carefully in assemblies and show respect to each other. They are aware of their rights, and the responsibilities they have towards the rights of other children in their school. For example, each class has created a class charter, using articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Most pupils speak politely and confidently to adults and are keen to share their learning and information about the school. They benefit from strong relationships with their teachers, other adults in the school and the wider community. For example, many pupils participate enthusiastically in the community walking project and other inter-generational activities.

Nearly all pupils engage well and settle quickly on arrival into class and are ready to learn. Many pupils work effectively in a group to discuss ideas and create questions. For example, Year 6 pupils discuss successfully why humans might need to establish a human colony on Mars, and then ask purposeful questions to expand their thinking. However, a minority of pupils do not persevere to produce work of a high quality, they have limited independent skills and do not reflect purposefully on how to improve their work.

Nearly all pupils understand the important of exercise. They enjoy taking part in engaging daily fitness activities, focusing on both physical and emotional wellbeing. Sport's ambassadors from key stage 2 organise valuable fitness activities for younger pupils at lunchtimes. Many pupils represent the school successfully in sporting competitions. Nearly all pupils know how to make healthy choices about what they eat. For example, the Year 6 fruit tuck shop is well-attended at playtimes.

Most pupils like school and feel safe, secure and well cared for. They know they can talk to an adult each playtime by going to the highly effective 'have a chat' session, and can also attend the weekly 'happy café'. Pupils with specific social and emotional needs make very good progress against their targets, as a result of effective interventions. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. For example, they understand how to protect a password and the information they should not share with someone on the internet.

Most pupils are keen to take on worthwhile leadership roles within the school. Many pupil leadership groups have been effective in making decisions to improve the school. For example, the eco-council promotes sustainability effectively across the school. They organise a uniform shop to encourage the reuse of school uniform items and also arrange litter picks. Pupils in other groups contribute to school life by, for example, improving the environment of the school with the new bike racks and shelter.

Nearly all pupils value highly the school's place and impact on the local community. The head boy and head girl represent the school at community remembrance services and Christmas celebrations. The highly regarded choir sings at local events to fundraise for charity. Pupils have recently made parcels to help homeless people.

Many pupils have a good understanding of the ways in which humans can impact positively and negatively on the environment. For example, Year 6's 'drowning in plastic' project involved a wide range of skills and activities to learn about the impact of plastic on the oceans.

Pupils' attendance is very good and most pupils are punctual. Attendance levels compare well to those in other similar schools.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Staff have very good working relationships with pupils and employ effective behaviour management strategies that ensure a positive and purposeful learning environment. Teaching has a positive effect on many pupils' standards. In most classes, teachers ask questions frequently and skilfully to develop pupils' responses and ideas further. In the best cases, they use questioning well to share good work and ensure that pupils know how to be successful in their activities. However in the foundation phase, although the content of lessons engages many pupils' interest appropriately, teachers and teaching assistants tend to over-direct pupil activities. This limits the development of wider skills such as resilience and independence.

The thematic approach to planning stimulates nearly all pupils' interest and encourages their engagement in learning. Through class discussion at the beginning of a new topic, pupils have appropriate opportunities to make choices about what they would like to learn. For example, pupils in lower key stage 2 chose a topic on food and wanted to investigate pizzas. This culminated in a trip to a pizza restaurant. Teachers arrange worthwhile trips to reinforce class topics. In the foundation phase, teachers ensure that the indoor learning areas meet pupils' requirements appropriately. The use of outdoor areas is developing satisfactorily, for example, pupils engage enthusiastically in building a castle as part of their role play. However, in too many cases across the school, activities do not challenge pupils to achieve at the level of which they are capable.

Teachers ensure good opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. For instance, in the foundation phase pupils write their addresses when labelling parcels for the 'Jolly Christmas Postman'. They use a map of the street in Cwm to direct a programmable toy to different destination and landmarks. In Year 3, pupils use their numeracy skills successfully to compare the prices of fair trade and non-fair trade goods.

The school ensures that assessments are valid and accurate through regular validation meetings internally and with teachers from other schools. Teachers' feedback often helps pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve. However, this is not consistent and in too many cases feedback does not indicate to pupils what they need to do next or provide sufficient opportunities for them to make improvements.

The provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills across the school is a notable strength. Nearly all members of staff use Welsh commands and phrases effectively and lessons link well to pupils' everyday lives, such as their families and homes. The school has a range of colourful displays to encourage the use of Welsh outside the classroom and the 'Criw Cymraeg' conduct a weekly assembly where everyone recites the Welsh school prayer. The use of visitors and visits enrich pupils' learning well, such as through visits to museums and local important landmarks. The school celebrates the culture and heritage of Wales well, for example through studying the effect of the World War One on Cwm and the number of soldiers who lost their lives. Local artists visit the school and work with pupils to produce interesting portraits using food paint.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Cwm Primary School is a caring and nurturing school. Its ethos ensures very strong relationships between staff and pupils and places the school at the heart of the community.

The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. Experienced and knowledgeable teaching assistants lead effective interventions to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of targeted pupils. For example, an oracy support programme is successful in developing pupils' listening skills and improves their ability to share ideas through the use of a range of sentence structures and tenses. Staff have developed a simple and effective method to summarise pupils on a single page. This provides staff with clarity over each pupils' individual interests and needs. The special needs coordinator and teachers work together to create beneficial individual education plans with relevant targets for pupils in need of additional support. However, outside of additional support sessions, teachers do not always sufficiently consider these targets or ensure that tasks are suitable for pupils of all abilities when planning lessons and activities.

The school provides highly effective support to pupils with emotional and social difficulties through careful assessment and targeted interventions. Nearly all staff are aware of these pupils' needs and how to meet them. Recent staff professional learning on coping with adverse childhood experiences and attachment issues has further helped teachers and teaching assistants to understand and support these pupils.

The school has suitable processes to assess and track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. The school tracks and monitors attendance very effectively and addresses any issues of poor attendance actively.

The school has established very good working relationships with the parents and they value the school's caring and supportive ethos. The school keeps parents well informed about how their child is progressing, through reports and parents' evenings. The school runs beneficial workshops to enable parents to develop their understanding of how pupils learn, for example by explaining how teachers teach multiplication and division. This is effective in helping parents to support their child with their work at home. The school communicates important information about the life of the school effectively through social media.

The school promotes healthy eating and drinking very well and helps pupils to understand the benefits of healthy choices. It sets very high expectations for behaviour and works successfully with partners to address issues when they arise. For example, the Police Liaison Officer supported the school effectively to help pupils understand the need to treat everyone equally. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Pupils benefit from the school's comprehensive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The school plans successfully for pupils to take on a growing range of responsibilities as they mature. For example, digital leaders organise ICT equipment and help other learners with their ICT skills in class.

The school plays an important role at the centre of its community. Links with local organisations enable pupils to develop their self-confidence to perform or speak in front of different audiences and with a variety of people. For example, the successful school choir sings regularly in community events and with other choirs. The school's work to extend its wellbeing initiatives into the local community is a particular strength. For instance, its 'intergenerational walking project' helps develop pupils' awareness of their role in supporting the needs of others in the local community

The school's personal and social education programme ensures that pupils develop a sound understanding of how people change as they mature and the importance of considering the views and beliefs of others. Assemblies and religious education lessons develop pupils' sense of spiritual awareness and knowledge of cultures around the globe. For example, pupils in key stage 2, compare the features of major world religions such as Sikhism, Judaism and Christianity. The school integrates pupils' understanding of the wider world into class topics appropriately. For example, the 'around the world' topic in key stage 2 has allowed pupils to investigate a range of arts, facts and traditions from chosen countries.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has developed a clear vision for the school that places pupils' wellbeing at the heart of its work. She recognises that pupils need to feel safe, happy and secure to be able to learn. She shares this vision very effectively with staff, pupils, governors and parents, who work collaboratively to create a positive learning environment where pupils feel valued and cared for.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of themselves and others. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and discharge these well. A particular strength of leadership is the sense of team working and collaboration that underpins the school's work. The organisation of staff into four curriculum teams is effective in ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants have good quality opportunities to develop their leadership skills. They create and implement action plans for their curriculum areas, monitoring their effectiveness and reporting on progress. Staff are keen to take on leadership roles. For example, teaching assistants with responsibility for implementing a nurture intervention programme have taken the initiative in developing tracking systems that allow them to monitor the progress of the pupils they work with.

The governing body is developing its role effectively. They gather first-hand information about the quality of provision and its impact on pupil outcomes through looking at pupils' work using crib sheets produced by staff and by undertaking visits to lessons. This provides them with the information they need to provide effective challenge and support to the work of the school.

The school is developing well as a learning community. Staff are keen to learn from each other and colleagues in other schools. For example, visits to another primary school led to the implementation of 'independent zones' across the school. These are beginning to improve the opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they learn in maths and literacy lessons independently. Teachers have begun to use research information well to help reflect and improve their practice. For example, in the foundation phase, a teacher videoed pupils to provide a baseline record of their oracy skills before trialling a new approach to improve their vocabulary. She then used the video to measure the progress the pupils had made over time and to judge whether the intervention had been successful. The school shares aspects of its work successfully with other providers by hosting visits and through staff presenting at conferences. This is particularly the case for its strong work on ensuring high levels of pupil wellbeing.

The school has a strong track record of improvement in many areas. In most cases, their self-evaluation procedures identify relevant areas for improvement and leaders plan effective actions to address these. For example, staff identified successfully the need to improve pupils' ICT skills. Similarly, they recognise the need to improve pupils' resilience in their learning. The school's actions to improve standards of pupils' Welsh have been particularly effective. However, in a very few cases, the school does not identify important areas for improvement, such as the quality of foundation phase provision or ensuring that teaching meets the needs of pupils of all abilities.

Senior leaders work well with the governing body to oversee financial and other resources. They link spending closely to the school's improvement priorities and regularly evaluate whether expenditure is cost effective by reviewing their action plans. The school has sufficient teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum and meet the needs of pupils. It is well resourced, with plentiful books, ICT hardware and other equipment. Leaders plan well for the use of grant funding, including the pupil development grant, which they target effectively to support vulnerable learners.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

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.