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

A report on

Llanilltud Faerdref Primary

St Illtyd's Road
Church Village
Pontypridd
RCT
CF38 1DB

Date of inspection: January 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Llanilltud Faerdref Primary

Name of provider	Llanilltud Faerdref Primary
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	183
Pupils of statutory school age	136
Number in nursery classes	24
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.0%)	34.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	*
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	5.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/05/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2014
Start date of inspection	30/01/2023

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Llanilltud Faerdref is a happy, caring school at the heart of the community it serves. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and well cared for and have a sense of pride in their school.

Pupils' well-being is central to the school's culture. Staff are highly committed in ensuring that they meet pupils' well-being needs each day, in order to prepare them for learning. The curriculum provides a broad range of learning experiences and is well structured to ensure that most pupils make beneficial progress in their learning. Pupils benefit from a well-developed forest school area to learn bushcraft skills, such as recognising bird calls and making bird houses. In addition, staff have made good use of the new school build to create authentic learning opportunities and to develop mathematical skills such as area and perimeter. However, pupils do not always develop their independent learning skills well enough. This is because on occasions, teachers over-direct pupils' learning activities. In addition, in around a half of classes, teachers promote pupils' problem-solving skills well. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school.

Over time, most pupils make good progress from their starting points in most areas of learning. Nearly all pupils develop a real love of mathematics and are keen to share their work and demonstrate their mathematical skills. In the majority of classes, strong teaching supports pupils to develop their reasoning and thinking skills well. However, this is not consistent across the school. Most pupils make strong progress in writing and reading. The development of pupils' oracy skills is a strength of the school.

Pupils with additional learning needs have clear development plans with relevant targets. However, adults do not always implement these plans as well as they could to support pupil progress.

Leaders have worked well with stakeholders to create a shared vision, underpinned by the school's moto 'Care, share, believe, achieve'. This vision permeates every area of the school and is exemplified by the headteacher, staff and pupils. Leaders have developed worthwhile systems to support strong self-evaluation of school practice, identifying strengths and areas requiring further development. As a result, the school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis, with a clear focus on well-chosen improvement priorities.

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' independent learning skills

R2 Use the best practice across the school to ensure that all teaching allows pupils to develop their reasoning, thinking and problem-solving skills

R3 Ensure that the classroom provision for additional learning needs takes good account of the targets within individual development plans

R4 Develop arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking in line with the Welsh Government's requirements

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at school most pupils make good progress in learning. This includes pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement. Pupils with additional learning needs make suitable progress in developing their personal skills but their progress in other aspects of their learning is less consistent.

Most pupils make strong progress in developing their oracy and communication skills. For example, many pupils in the reception class speak confidently about photos of themselves as babies. By Year 6, most pupils speak with enthusiasm and confidence, for example when explaining how they create animations using a software programme. Many pupils across the school make steady progress in communicating using British Sign Language. For example, many Year 5 pupils 'sign' their names and use signing to answer simple questions about their likes and dislikes.

Most pupils across the school develop their reading skills well. They develop a passion and enthusiasm for books and stories that supports them to read a wide range of texts and genres. In Year 1, most pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds well to read tricky superhero words accurately, for example 'whoosh' and 'transform'. By Year 6, most pupils scan a text to locate specific information or a humorous phrase. They use their higher order skills such as deduction successfully to 'read between the lines'.

Most pupils' writing develops successfully during their time at the school and they apply these skills well in a range of contexts. Many younger pupils develop their mark-making skills suitably as they draw using tablet computers or make marks in the sand. By Year 2, many pupils communicate their ideas well when writing letters, instructions and stories. Most pupils in Years 3 and 4 write interesting explanations of how the skeleton works, using subject specific vocabulary correctly, such as cranium and bone-marrow. By Year 6, many pupils engage the reader very well with their writing. For example, they use persuasive phrases effectively to encourage tourists to visit Wales.

Most pupils apply their literacy skills successfully across the curriculum. For example, in mathematics, Year 2/3 pupils are reminded to practise the skills they have learnt in an oracy lesson. They enunciate slowly and clearly in their role as a shopkeeper, taking payment and giving the correct change for pretend purchases and enjoy developing their social skills when 'passing the time of day' with friends.

Pupils develop their skills in learning the Welsh language appropriately. Most younger pupils follow basic instructions in Welsh. They reply to simple sentences and phrases with appropriate vocabulary, for example when letting the adult know their lunchtime choices. Many older pupils display a developing understanding of the Welsh language, for instance using more complex, extended sentences when describing their likes and dislikes. They use the past tense correctly, for example when describing yesterday's weather.

Most pupils across the school make strong progress in mathematics, making at least expected progress. This is because teachers have worked to devise a whole-school strategy that encourages pupils to develop an enjoyment and fascination for mathematics.

Younger pupils recognise, add and subtract numbers to twenty successfully. By Year 3, many pupils know and recall times tables facts at, and sometimes above, an age-appropriate level. Older pupils develop and use their mathematics and numeracy skills well. For example, most pupils in Year 5 multiply two- and three-digit numbers together, to work out the costs of buying take-away food for groups of pupils in their own class. In Year 6, most pupils read and plot co-ordinates in all four quadrants. They use this knowledge as part of their topic work, for example when looking at maps of Europe during the Second World War. However, too often, the provision does not allow pupils to use and apply their numeracy and mathematical skills independently in other areas of the curriculum. As a result, too many pupils do not develop their reasoning, problem-solving and thinking skills to a high enough level.

Most pupils across the school make suitable progress in developing their digital skills). For example, they use software confidently to communicate using writing, drawing, graphs and charts. Younger pupils animate models and toys confidently using simple animation technology, and older pupils create interactive animated games competently using more sophisticated software.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils' well-being is a high priority at the school. Nearly all pupils feel well cared for, safe and secure in the school and know who to speak to if they are worried or upset. There is a positive working relationship between staff and pupils, and as a result most pupils feel that they are a valued member of the school community.

Nearly all pupils behave well in classes and around the school. They are polite and respectful. Nearly all pupils settle quickly in class and are eager to learn. Many pupils take pride in their achievements and the progress they are making. Many pupils are beginning to influence the life and work of the school appropriately, for example through their input into the development of World Book Day celebrations, ordering playground resources and renovations to the 'bushcraft area'. Most pupils feel that their opinions are valued and acted upon. Most pupils understand how to keep safe when online. They are aware of the importance of keeping personal information and passwords secure and of the positives and negatives of social media.

Most pupils enjoy participating in physical activities. There is a suitable ethos of activity and exercise throughout the school. As well as PE and after-school clubs, a few pupils participate in the daily mile. Many pupils have a growing awareness of the importance of making healthy choices with their diets. However, too many pupils eat high fat or high sugar snacks at breaktimes.

Nearly all pupils understand the school motto and rules. Older pupils appreciate the reasons rules are in place and follow them successfully, acting as good role models for younger pupils. Pupils clearly explain how school rules are formulated and the impact these rules have on ensuring that the school is an ordered, happy environment for all.

Many pupils enjoy working in pairs and groups both in formal and informal learning activities. When given the opportunity, pupils are beginning to develop their independent learning skills. However, many pupils are often over-reliant on adult support.

Pupils are attending school more regularly this year, compared to last year when the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact nationally on school attendance. Considerably fewer pupils are persistently absent this year, compared to last year.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has a clear vision to develop an engaging, enjoyable curriculum that develops positive attitudes to learning and supports most pupils to make good progress overall.

Many interesting topics capture pupils' interest in their learning effectively. For example, pupils in Year 6 speak with enthusiasm about 'A Child's War' topic and the opportunities it gives them to learn about children's lives in the past. A superhero topic in Year 1 sparks much enjoyment and energy as, for example, pupils work together successfully to make digital comic strips displaying their friends' superpowers.

Despite challenges due to building work, the school uses the outdoor eco area to enhance the curriculum effectively. For example, pupils across the school enjoy bushcraft sessions where they take part in worthwhile activities such as identifying local birds and encouraging them to the area by making bird feeders. In the best examples, teachers use these sessions purposefully to develop pupils' problem-solving and thinking skills.

The school makes good use of local initiatives to involve older pupils in authentic learning experiences that raise aspirations well. For example, older pupils work with a local engineering firm to design and build their own model racing car. They put their design to the test when taking part in a race against cars made by other local schools. This beneficial project supports pupils to develop their confidence and raises aspirations successfully.

The school is developing worthwhile strategies to involve pupils in determining what and how they learn. For example, 'I Wonder' sessions involve pupils in generating their own questions to investigate. Pupils thoroughly enjoy these opportunities to follow their own interests, such as when older pupils find out more about fingerprints during a topic about identity.

Most staff across the school develop strong working relationships with pupils. They show consistent care and kindness and, as a result, almost all pupils are comfortable in seeking help and asking for support. Respect between pupils and adults is strong and pupils' behaviour is managed very well.

In many classes, teachers deliver lessons at an effective pace, share learning intentions effectively and provide clear instructions. Most teaching uses a range of approaches to engage pupils' interest well. For example, staff successfully use a captivating video of a 'witch' to promote pupils' interest in a poem about a spell.

Many staff have a strong professional knowledge relating to the subjects they teach. For example, teachers in younger classes have an effective understanding of how to teach early reading strategies. Across the school, the teaching of key skills such as literacy, Welsh language and digital skills is successful in supporting pupils' effective progress in these areas of learning. A particular strength is the way staff foster confidence and a sense of achievement in pupils when teaching maths. This results in many pupils developing a love for the subject, which impacts positively on their progress in this area.

Most teaching uses questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding. For example, questioning in the nursery class supports pupils' exploration of a range of fruit successfully. Overall, teachers make their classes engaging places in which all groups of pupils can learn productively. However, in a few classes, resources are in a state of disrepair and equipment is disorganised.

In most cases, teachers know their pupils' strengths and areas for improvement well. Most staff are beginning to use ongoing assessment successfully to deepen their understanding of pupils' progress. Many staff use verbal feedback effectively during lessons to check understanding and help pupils move forward in their learning. For instance, they ask relevant questions about the text and prompt pupils to correct their own mistakes, during group guided reading sessions. Many teachers use visual prompts to provide suitable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and a few provide beneficial written feedback.

Many teachers deploy support staff well to play an important role in pupils' learning, particularly when supporting their personal and social development. On a few occasions, their deployment lacks clarity of purpose, as they are not clear enough about their role in supporting learning. The principles of foundation learning are reflected suitably through a range of provision, both indoors and out, that support young pupils to learn through hands-on experiences. Many activities engage younger pupils well and enhance their learning effectively, such as when staff support pupils to bathe and dress baby dolls. However, overall, across the school, too many learning experiences, particularly for younger pupils, are overly directed by adults and often involve pupils sitting for long periods. Across the school, pupils have few opportunities to make choices about their learning. This limits the opportunities for them to access and select their own resources and develop their creative, thinking and problem-solving skills independently.

Care, support and guidance

The school provides a caring and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, happy and secure. An ethos focused on pupils' physical, social and emotional well-being. Most pupils feel confident that they can readily access help and support from members of staff and fellow pupils.

Pupils' emotional well-being is supported effectively in a range of engaging ways. For instance, older pupils benefit from using breathing techniques and listening to music to help them relax.

There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to be active during the school day including, for example, playing basketball at playtimes. The school provides extra-

curricular sports clubs, such as netball and rugby, that help pupils to develop an effective understanding of the importance of physical exercise to their health.

The school provides a few opportunities for pupils to learn about the benefits of healthy eating and drinking. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 investigate how much sugar is in a range of bottled drinks and recognise that some are unhealthy. However, a culture of healthy eating within the school has not been established. For example, staff too often provide pupils with sweets and unhealthy snacks, and drinking water is not readily available in classrooms.

There is a system of pupil voice groups such as School Council, Eco Committee and Criw Cymraeg, where pupils' opinions are valued and acted upon. The pupils involved are proud of their achievements such as improving playground equipment. However, overall, pupil voice groups are heavily adult led, which limits the opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills.

Staff are effective in developing pupils' understanding of their Welsh culture and heritage. For example, the school holds an Eisteddfod when pupils perform their Welsh language poems and produce detailed paintings inspired by Rhiannon Roberts. Pupils also complete a range of interesting tasks at home, which include making highly decorative love spoons and writing a song about Dan Biggar.

Staff support pupils to understand the importance of showing care and kindness effectively. For example, older pupils are encouraged to recognise the needs of others when they run a coffee morning to raise funds for the Macmillan Cancer Support charity. Regular whole-school events foster a sense of belonging and community for pupils well, such as when pupils pitch tents on the field for a 'big camp' funday.

The school effectively supports pupils to recognise a range of rights in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. For instance, many pupils speak with compassion about children around the world who endure dangerous journeys to school in order to secure their right to an education.

Staff develop pupils' understanding of issues relating to equality and diversity suitably. For example, they provide reading books that tackle difficult issues such as racism. This deepens pupils' understanding of discrimination appropriately. This promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development well.

Educational visits support pupils' learning well. For example, older pupils enjoyed a recent trip to the Brecon War Museum where they thoroughly enjoyed playing the part of evacuees. Younger pupils in Year 1 visit Fonmon Castle, which brings their topic of 'dangerous dinosaurs' to life as they observe the scale models of a range of dinosaurs.

Vulnerable pupils are at the heart of the school's work, which drives caring and supportive provision. Leaders and staff use pupil tracking information effectively to plan and provide beneficial intervention support for relevant pupils that impacts very well on their progress.

The school makes appropriate provision for pupils with additional learning needs. Caring support staff provide nurturing guidance to ensure that pupils feel safe and make strong progress in their personal and social development. The school works well with external agencies to, for example, to devise clear Individual Development Plans with relevant targets. However, the targets in these plans do not transfer to classroom practice effectively enough to direct support staff in their roles. As a result, provision is not always sufficiently targeted to pupils' individual learning needs.

The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The culture of safeguarding is strong and embedded across all aspects of the school's work. For example, leaders have worked to reduce persistent absenteeism and ensured that all groups of pupils attend school regularly.

Leadership and management

Leaders, staff, governors, pupils and parents have developed a clear vision for the education and well-being of all pupils based on everyone supporting each other to give of their best. The vision underpins the school's ethos. The headteacher models professional values that set the tone for a positive, nurturing and kind school environment. Leaders put the well-being of pupils foremost in their decision-making, ensuring that pupils and their families are cared for.

The headteacher has invested in the community, spending time with community groups in order to have a strong understanding of the needs of the pupils the school serves. Leaders know the pupils and families in the school exceptionally well and have worked hard to reduce the impact of poverty across the community. For example, they provide opportunities for pupils to attend residential visits, and other experiences that they might not otherwise be able to take part in.

Leaders have developed very good relationships with parents through strong information sharing and daily contact through an open-door policy. Parents are regularly invited into the school to learn how to support their children at home and to build on the work of the school. As a result, parents trust the leadership of the school, feel very well supported and are exceptionally proud of their school and the role it plays in the community.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the national priorities and have been successful in working to keep pupils safe, reducing the impact of poverty and improving the standards of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They use grants well, including the pupil development grant, to improve the outcomes for groups of pupils. As a result, most pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make sound progress from their individual starting points.

The governing body plays an active and important part in the life and work of the school. Governors are knowledgeable about their roles and discharge them well, giving appropriate support and challenge where needed to the school. They work effectively as a full governing body and within useful subcommittees. Governors allocate funding appropriately, ensuring that spending decisions are effective in supporting the needs of the school. They know the school's strengths and areas for development as they make regular visits, supporting self-evaluation activities and

building relationships with staff and pupils. However, governors have not ensured that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The headteacher has developed robust systems that allow governors, staff and sometimes pupils to evaluate learning effectively. Leaders use the information gleaned well to address areas of underperformance, strategically planning professional learning opportunities to develop staff and improve provision. For example, staff have collaborated well with other schools, particularly within the local cluster, to strengthen the curriculum. In addition, pupils' Welsh skills have recently improved following professional learning for all members of staff. Most performance management targets link well with the school development plan.

Leaders promote a beneficial culture of safeguarding that effects all aspects of school life. Staff undergo systematic training and more senior staff and governors undergo higher level training. As a result, school policies are known and acted upon effectively to keep pupils safe and well cared for.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer 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/carers 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' well-being, 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)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.