



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

A report on

Cantref Primary

**Harold Road
Abergavenny
Monmouthshire
NP7 7DG**

Date of inspection: April 2023

by

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

About Cantref Primary

Name of provider	Cantref Primary
Local authority	Monmouthshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	238
Pupils of statutory school age	179
Number in nursery classes	29
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%)	12.4%
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%)	21.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	03/09/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	10/11/2014
Start date of inspection	24/04/2023

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

All pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to Cantref Primary school every day. They enter their classrooms with gusto, ready to begin learning. All pupils look out for each other and the relationship between the older and younger pupils is a strength of the school. The caring attitudes of pupils and staff contribute positively to the inclusive and welcoming community, where pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

Nearly all pupils make good progress from their starting points during their time in school. They are articulate and confident speakers who engage well in their work. The mutually respectful and positive relationships that exist amongst staff, and staff and pupils, also enhance pupils' learning successfully.

The pupils' enthusiasm for learning is a result of the vibrant teaching. Teachers plan engaging activities for pupils to enable them to make effective progress in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They provide pupils with numerous opportunities to build on their knowledge and understanding but, generally, the whole school approach to meeting the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales lacks clarity. In addition, teachers' feedback does not always provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and make improvements.

Staff use the indoor and outdoor environments well to support engaging learning opportunities. In particular, their use of the school grounds provides innovative experiences for pupils to learn in authentic and meaningful contexts. Staff nurture and provide effective support and guidance for pupils in all aspects of school life. The school provides an extensive range of extra-curricular activities that develop and enhance a wide range of skills effectively and inspires pupils to take up new interests. These experiences develop the pupils' life skills and well-being very successfully.

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. The senior leadership team and governors share his clear vision, and all staff work effectively with them to secure the best provision possible to improve pupils' outcomes.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that the curriculum is meaningful for all pupils and builds systematically and coherently across the school
- R2 Ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to improve their own work

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning during their time at the school. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals progress well from their individual starting points and achieve well against their personal targets.

On entry to the school, most develop purposeful vocabulary quickly and become confident to engage well with adults and with each other. For example, the Nursery pupils can recall and share facts about spring, with ease. By Year 2 most pupils communicate their needs and thoughts clearly. They talk enthusiastically about their topic and describe the reasons behind their recent beach clean. From Year 3 to Year 6, most pupils develop conversations maturely. They speak knowledgeably about their roles and responsibilities, and about school life in general. Overall, oracy skills are a strength.

Most pupils develop effective reading skills and apply them well to their work. By the time pupils are in Year 2, many read fluently and decode unfamiliar words accurately using effective phonic strategies. Most pupils continue to develop their reading skills successfully as they move from Year 3 to Year 5. In Year 6, pupils read a variety of challenging texts with good understanding. They are confident readers and use well-researched information from various texts and relevant websites to enrich their work across the curriculum.

Many pupils in the Nursery develop their writing skills well by mark making, drawing symbols, and beginning to form their letters correctly. By Year 1, many apply their phonic knowledge to spell simple words and construct simple sentences well for example, to find the 'lost' penguin. As they move through the school, pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 develop a broad understanding of a wide range of genres and they use vocabulary creatively to produce interesting pieces of writing. They apply their skills effectively in other areas of learning.

Most pupils enjoy learning Welsh. They respond well to teachers' instructions and demonstrate a good understanding of basic commands. A few pupils respond confidently in Welsh when asked simple questions but, overall, most pupils' progress in their Welsh language skills is adequate.

Through structured Maths lessons most pupils gain a good understanding of a range of skills. They use these confidently when completing their tasks and use them flexibly in a range of meaningful activities. By Year 2, many have a secure grasp of number, they recognise shapes, use money in their 'garden centre' and develop confidence in telling the time. As they move through the school, most pupils progress well in their numeracy skills and their mathematical understanding builds successfully on their previous knowledge. They apply their skills well to solve problems, for example, to calculate the time it takes to cycle from one rugby stadium in Wales to another in Scotland. By Year 6, most pupils use a wide range of methods competently. Most pupils across the school use their numeracy skills confidently in other areas of the curriculum.

Pupils' digital skills across the school are purposeful. From Nursery to Year 2, pupils have the skills to instruct a programmable toy to move in an increasingly complex variety of directions. They use a variety of apps and programs to support their learning in language and maths. As the pupils move through the school, most develop their use of simple coding programs, multimedia tools and word processing packages to a good standard. Nearly all pupils speak intelligently about e-safety and understand its importance when learning at school and at home.

Most pupils develop creative and musical skills well during well-focused dance and music activities. Across the school, pupils confidently use a variety of mediums in art lessons. For instance, they use plastic rubbish to create sea creatures and emulate the work of famous artists by mixing paint competently.

Through a range of activities, pupils develop a wide range of physical skills. For example, most pupils under seven use the outdoor trail to improve their co-ordination and take part in the school's 'Elf run'. Nearly all pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 continue to build on these skills successfully through varied opportunities, such as walking a mile a day, taking part in the annual triathlon and to explore the outdoors, as part of the curriculum and during playtimes.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils throughout the school feel safe, secure, respected and treated fairly. They clearly love school and are very happy to be part of the school community. They understand the strengths of the school and are proud of it. Nearly all pupils feel relaxed in school and are always ready to learn. They joke and laugh freely with each other and staff, whilst always showing appropriate respect.

Nearly all pupils are ambitious about what they can achieve and are positive about learning.. They tackle new challenges with confidence, expect to achieve and have a 'can-do' attitude. For example, when building a camouflaged shelter in the school grounds most pupils approach their work with enthusiasm, they persevere for long periods at the task and take the initiative to work through problems when they are stuck. They support each other extremely well and are always ready to offer advice or a helping hand. Many pupils consider difficult work to be good, because 'You learn more things and it is fun!'.

Many pupils respond effectively to problem-solving activities, they work well independently and have the capability to find additional solutions. For instance, in Year 6 they work sensitively with others to overcome difficulties when they trying to find the best material to protect an egg from breaking when dropped from a first-story window.

The behaviour of all pupils is exemplary. Nearly all pupils show kindness and respect for one another regularly. Older pupils in Year 5 and 6 set a very good example and, relate well to younger pupils when given positions of responsibility. Nearly all pupils are proud members of the numerous pupil voice groups. They are confident that their views are listened to and feel that the changes they have made have been beneficial to the school. The Sports Committee have made playtimes more inclusive by broadening the choice of games for pupils to play. In addition, through a number of fund-raising activities the Well-being Group have purchased a defibrillator for the

school and raised other pupils' awareness of how important it is to keep fit and healthy.

Most pupils show a mature attitude to ethical issues within the school. They apply their sound knowledge of rights and responsibilities to understanding issues of fairness in their daily life. Most pupils also apply their understanding of sustainability well. For example, through growing a range of vegetables successfully in the school garden they demonstrate their knowledge of the importance of locally grown food for the environment. However, overall, they do not always understand how the principles of equality and children's rights apply to Wales and beyond.

Nearly all pupils display an excellent level of engagement in their work. They sustain concentration, avoid distractions and show a natural curiosity. Most pupils are very open to new ideas and are particularly good at working in collaboration with each other. They listen carefully to the suggestions of their peers, taking it in turns to reply. Most pupils respond well to feedback through discussions with adults. They are keen to learn and how to improve. However, because of a lack of opportunity, their own involvement in improving their work is less effective.

Most pupils understand and can discuss at length the importance of eating healthily. They take every opportunity to improve their physical skills through numerous lessons, extra-curricular sports clubs and school-based challenges, such as the annual triathlon.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, teachers and support staff, know their pupils well and develop strong, supportive relationships that creates a nurturing and inclusive learning environment. They encourage respect and have high expectations of behaviour that leads to the calm and caring ethos of the school.

Staff have worked productively to begin their journey to develop the school's curriculum in line with the Curriculum for Wales. Teachers focus on a range of interesting topics across the areas of learning and experience to stimulate and build on pupils' knowledge. They plan a rich variety of experiences and capture the pupils' curiosity, encouraging pupils to contribute questions and express their areas of interest. The school arranges a wide range of outside visits, visitors and links with the community to enhance the curriculum. For example, a local theatre group has enhanced pupils' understanding of Welsh culture through a workshop on Welsh folktales and pupils' engagement in a research project on the journey to planet Mars has developed their scientific understanding. However, a cohesive whole school approach curriculum design is still at an early stage of development and planning does not include enough authentic learning experiences for pupils which consider the school and its locality.

The school's provision to improve oracy, reading and writing is effective, with pupils demonstrating particularly high level of oracy skills. In addition, teachers develop pupils' discreet literacy and numeracy skills well and provide numerous opportunities for pupils to apply them authentically in other areas of learning. Staff plan a range of purposeful lessons to ensure that pupils understand and extend their digital skills confidently as they move from class to class.

Teachers ensure a range of worthwhile opportunities to learn about the history and culture of Wales and there is also a strong commitment to develop and further improve Welsh language skills. There are many opportunities provided throughout the day for pupils to practise their skills. However, this has yet to impact positively on the overall progress of Welsh across the school.

In class, teachers use clever ways to engage pupils into learning and teaching moves at a lively pace. They use a variety of successful strategies that enable pupils to stay on task and complete their work. Most teachers use questioning well to check for understanding and make strong links to prior learning and reinforce key ideas. They meet the needs of their pupils well and match tasks closely to pupils' abilities, offering all pupils an appropriate level of challenge. Teaching assistants are highly effective in supporting pupils. They contribute skilfully to the teaching and learning, using their expertise regularly to plan activities, for example, to support more able pupils to make good progress.

Opportunities for pupils to assess and reflect on their progress is at a developing stage. Written feedback celebrates pupils' work and achievements well, but it doesn't regularly help the pupils to improve their work further. Day-to-day assessment strategies to aid 'in the moment' improvements are limited. As a result, this hampers the progress pupils make when they apply their skills across the curriculum.

The provision in the outdoor area for the younger pupils is a real strength of the school and contributes highly effectively to the development of their problem solving, social and creative skills across the curriculum. This well-established and well-used provision also supports the pupils' enjoyment, interest and well-being. For example, Reception pupils build their bug hotels to the exact design they had drawn earlier using all the resources skilfully from the outdoor space. Staff in all classes use the extensive school grounds creatively, this includes providing a range of purposeful extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' physical skills. In addition, the school organises challenges such as climbing the local peaks and cycling the distance between Cardiff and Scotland virtually to raise awareness of a neurological disease. Annual visits to a nearby residential centre enable pupils to learn about team work while taking part in outdoor activities.

Care, support and guidance

The school knows its pupils, their backgrounds, and the local community very well. All staff place a high priority on the well-being of all pupils and this strong focus on supporting all pupils' emotional, health and social needs is a key aspect of the school's provision. All pupils feel very safe in the caring environment created in the school, and as a result, behaviour and attitudes are exemplary.

The school's provision for all pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is robust. The class teachers and highly effective teaching assistants plan and deliver tailored programmes that meet the pupils' individual needs effectively. Staff track the progress of pupils requiring additional learning support carefully and, as a result, these pupils make the expected level of progress. The school works collaboratively with a wide range of external agencies to meet the needs of individual pupils well. In addition, the school ensures that pupils have access to a range of appropriate programmes that help them to deal with their feelings and emotions well.

The school encourages all pupils from Reception to Year 6 to be a member of pupil voice groups of their choice, this adds to the sense of fairness and equality within the school. These roles support the development of their self-confidence and help pupils influence the work of the school well. For example, the Charity Committee have worked with the parents to establish a much-appreciated 'Cantref clothing donation and exchange bank', that also strengthens pupils' awareness of sustainability effectively. Staff plan appropriate specialist topics to broaden pupils' understanding of issues such as race inequality and how this can affect society. Overall, however, pupils' knowledge and understanding of diversity and global issues is underdeveloped.

The importance of the community is a key feature of the school. Pupils are proud of their Welsh heritage and culture and are beginning to identify closely with their town and its surrounding area. From a young age, pupils develop as active citizens and make valuable contributions to the locality, to keep it free from litter and by planting seeds to create a hedgerow in the local park. These experiences help the pupils to respect and care for their own area well. In addition, the school makes good use of visitors to enrich pupils' experiences. For example, visits from local artists inspire pupils to produce pieces of art of high quality and to develop different artistic and other skills.

The school plans a range of purposeful activities for pupils to explore their rights as children within the school setting. Teachers skilfully include pupils' own questions and ideas into class discussions, such as the right for all children to have clean water and to be listened to. As a result, pupils across the school confidently distinguish between right and wrong. In addition, staff provide the pupils with numerous activities to develop their moral and ethical understanding. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own, and other's beliefs.

Through regular music and dance sessions, pupils cultivate their expressive art skills well. As they develop their self-confidence, the pupils compete in the school and local Eisteddfod in art, reciting and singing. Staff also provide an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs to further increase opportunities for pupils to develop their skills within areas of interest to them. These include sport, digital and Welsh that provide many and varied opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills and enthusiasm for lifelong learning. The pupils develop an understanding of the importance of a healthy body and there are several effective activities to teach the pupils about eating healthily.

The school monitors pupils' attendance effectively and, as a result, pupils' attendance rates are good. The strong culture of safeguarding and the inclusive ethos towards all pupils are a notable feature of the school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and the senior leadership team, has established a powerful vision for the school where a relentless focus on well-being ensures that pupils and staff thrive. Leaders use the school aims purposefully to create plans and policies that focus on the quality of teaching and

learning effectively. A particular strength is the way leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils and those from low-income families make good progress in relation to their starting points. The school uses the pupil development grants effectively to fund worthwhile programmes to improve pupils' social and emotional well-being and their basic skills.

Leaders throughout the school set high expectations for staff, pupils, and themselves. Their leadership has driven many significant initiatives, such as establishing a young carers support group, which is ably led by trained and skilled teaching assistants. The staff also benefit from the sense of teamwork and mutual support established in the school. Leaders give a high priority to ensuring that all staff understand and promote the school's safeguarding culture.

The school places a purposeful focus on national and local priorities in development planning, such as improving pupils' reading and numeracy skills. As a result, pupils make good progress in all these areas. More recently, leaders have identified and planned purposeful opportunities for pupils to regain their confidence in using their Welsh language skills in formal and informal situations. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of the plans on the progress that pupils make.

Governors have a sound understanding of the school's finances. In this aspect of the school, they act as a critical friend, effectively challenging the school on the outcomes of financial initiatives well. They work with leaders and pupils to ensure that the school has effective arrangement to promote healthy eating and drinking. The practice of gathering of first-hand evidence by visiting the school is still being re-established following the pandemic. As a result, this limits governors' ability to act to hold the school account in aspects of pupils' learning.

The school's leaders establish productive relationships with families and the wider community. Dialogue and communication with parents about whole-school issues and class specific activities are comprehensive and a strength of the school. The school provides regular opportunities for parents to share their opinions and to raise issues that may affect their children's well-being or learning. This enables the staff to address any concerns quickly and effectively.

Staff, pupils and governors take part in the review and agreement of improvement plans purposefully. The school gathers valuable first-hand evidence of standards and provision by listening to learners and through learning walks, lesson observations and work scrutiny. Overall, the school has a good track record for making and sustaining improvements. However, self-evaluation does not always have sufficient rigour to identify all the aspects of performance that require improvement. For example, a book scrutiny by all teachers focusing on the effectiveness of written feedback did not highlight the need for this feedback to move pupils' learning forward.

Leaders have created a positive ethos and culture to promote and support the professional learning of all staff very well. This training has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching. Although the school has focused suitably on whole-school training for the development of the Curriculum for Wales, it is only beginning to develop a whole school approach to the curriculum that ensures sufficient coverage and clarity around progression in pupils' skills.

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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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