



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

**A report on**

**Cwmclydach Primary**

**Wern Street  
Clydach Vale  
Tonypandy  
RCT  
CF40 2BQ**

**Date of inspection: October 2023**

**by**

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

## About Cwmclydach Primary

Name of provider	Cwmclydach 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	205
Pupils of statutory school age	158
Number in nursery classes	26
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%)	39.8%
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%)	4.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2015
Start date of inspection	09/10/2023
<p>The headteacher was appointed in September 2022. She was previously the substantive deputy headteacher and was acting headteacher during the Pandemic. During this time, she gained her NPQH.</p> <p>Over the last year there has been turbulence in staffing due to a high number of pregnancies and sickness amongst staff. At the time of the inspection, around half of the school's substantive staff were present.</p>	

The school manages a specialist 'nurture' provision on behalf of the LA for pupils in R-Y2. Pupils attend the setting Tuesday to Friday and return to their mainstream schools on Mondays. They are dual registered.

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](https://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

Cwmclydach Primary is an inclusive school where pupil and family well-being is high a priority. The headteacher works with governors and the school community to create a strong sense of belonging. Communication with parents is clear and timely through regular, worthwhile family engagement activities. As a result, parents feel valued and have a good understanding of their child's progress.

Generally, leaders have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils and successfully identify any potential barriers to learning. As a result, despite their low starting points, many pupils including those with additional learning needs (ALN) make appropriate progress during their time at school. Pupils engage well with their learning and most behave well using a range of strategies effectively to regulate their emotions and feelings.

The school's support for pupils with ALN is highly effective. Staff work with families and outside agencies successfully to determine pupils' needs and to adjust provision accordingly. Provision in the specialist nurture class provides highly beneficial support for pupils enabling them to develop well against their individual targets.

Through use of a worthwhile range of school improvement strategies, the headteacher and governing body have a clear understanding of school's strengths and areas for improvement. For example, the school is working diligently to bring about improvements to pupils' attendance. However, this work is at an early stage of development.

The school's curriculum provides pupils with an appropriate range of opportunities to develop skills in reading, oracy, Welsh and in their use of digital technology. However, opportunities for pupils to use these skills across the curriculum are limited and the school's provision to develop pupils' writing and mental mathematical skills progressively, as they move through the school, is at an early stage of development. Teachers support pupils to build on their prior learning appropriately. They ask suitable questions in class to check pupils' understanding and to move learning on. However, overall, they provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independence in learning and for pupils to act on feedback to improve their work.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve attendance
- R2 Improve teaching and assessment to ensure that pupils develop and use the full range of skills, particularly their writing and mental mathematics skills
- R3 Ensure that the learning environment and approaches to teaching and assessment enable pupils to develop as independent learners

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Many pupils start school with literacy and numeracy skills below those expected for their age. As they move through the school, many pupils including those eligible for free school meals make appropriate progress overall. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), especially those in the specialist nurture class, make strong progress against their individual targets. Pupils with better rates of attendance at school generally make more progress than those who miss school regularly.

Across the school, many pupils' oracy skills develop well. The youngest pupils begin to develop appropriate pronunciation of key words when speaking in front of others. Older pupils speak with confidence and listen carefully when discussing various aspects of their work. For example, in Years 5 and 6, they describe their learning about 'Retro Futureism', with enthusiasm and clarity.

From their individual starting points, many pupils make suitable progress in reading. The youngest pupils begin to show enjoyment in reading when they discuss the characters in their class book. As they move through the school, pupils develop a good knowledge of letter sounds and begin to blend these effectively when reading unknown words. Older pupils read fluently and with increasing expression. They have a suitable understanding of what they read, discuss character and make thoughtful predictions about what might happen next in a story.

The majority of pupils make suitable progress in their writing. The youngest pupils begin to make marks and develop their understanding of how to form letters. By Year 2, they start to use their knowledge of letter sounds, blending words effectively to build sentences. More able pupils begin to extend their writing suitably across a variety of genres. For example, when older pupils write a report about the Amazon River, they use paragraphs appropriately. However, too many pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 do not write well enough and at length across the curriculum. They do not develop a fluent writing style or present their work with sufficient care.

Overall, many pupils develop their Welsh language skills suitably. The youngest pupils use simple greetings with enthusiasm. Year 3, pupils develop an increasing range of vocabulary and express their likes and dislikes appropriately, for example when Year 5 pupils discuss their hobbies. Over time, many older pupils develop the confidence to extend their spoken sentences in Welsh.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing their mathematical skills. The youngest pupils begin to understand number facts such as number bonds to 10. Older pupils have a suitable understanding of addition, subtraction and multiplication.

Overall, however, many pupils do not have rapid recall of number facts and struggle to apply their skills to solve problems. As a result, very few pupils apply their numeracy skills effectively across other areas of the curriculum and in real-life contexts.

Most pupils develop their digital skills well. Younger pupils use a range of tools effectively to produce and edit text. As they move through the school, they develop a wider range of skills. For example, pupils in Year 3 develop appropriate information sharing skills when they produce their own multimedia presentations about environmental issues. By the end of their time in school, most pupils use online programming tools effectively such as when they use coding to create moving images.

Many pupils' physical skills develop appropriately. The youngest pupils move confidently around the indoor and outdoor classroom and develop good co-ordination when using small tools.

Many pupils develop their creative skills suitably during their time at school. They create good quality artwork and take pride in their drawing and painting work. For example, older pupils use pastels effectively to express their emotions and feelings in art.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Most pupils enjoy school and feel safe. From their individual starting points most pupils, including those with ALN, develop appropriate self-care and social skills. They use a variety of strategies successfully to regulate their emotions and feelings. As a result, most pupils behave well and show respect for others. They move around the school sensibly and play together positively during breaktimes. Most pupils feel well supported and know who to go to if they have a problem. They value the way that adults listen carefully to their needs and they trust adults to give them appropriate support.

Most pupils enjoy learning and participate enthusiastically in lessons. They readily work in pairs and groups, sharing ideas and taking turns. Most pupils contribute their own ideas appropriately in class and value the opportunity to learn about topics that interest them. For example, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 learned about the work of palaeontologists. However, generally, pupils do not develop sufficient independence in their learning due to the lack of opportunities to explore, be curious and investigate the world around them. Many pupils respond appropriately to questions during lessons about their work. However, overall, due to the lack of opportunity, pupils do not always use teacher feedback appropriately as a means of improving the quality of their work.

Most pupils relish the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities. They are proud of their contribution to school life and the difference that they make. For example, the healthy schools group talk enthusiastically about raising awareness of mental health in the community through their presentation to parents. Through the variety of pupil voice groups, pupils have begun to make a notable difference to school life. For example, because of pupil suggestions, the lunchtime environment

has significantly improved through the establishment of the school's café. Pupils now feel that lunchtimes are quieter and more enjoyable.

Most pupils, including those with ALN, feel included and enjoy participating in a wide range of activities during and after school. For example, they develop confidence and a wide range of skills during Welsh folk dancing, singing and in the school science and technology club. Most pupils in the specialist nurture class develop confidence and greater independence in their social and behavioural development. As a result, they work well alongside their peers and a few enjoy participating in mainstream school activities.

Many pupils demonstrate a growing awareness of their rights and responsibilities. They show understanding of important issues related to equality and diversity. For example, through their work with the Children's Commissioner for Wales, they understand their right to be happy and healthy. Most pupils understand the importance of how to live healthily such as when they make healthy choices about the snacks they eat in school. Most pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. For example, they know not to share passwords.

Many pupils begin to develop aspirations for the future and gain an appropriate understanding of the world of work. They value the range of visits and visitors to the school that help to enrich their learning. For example, Year 3, pupils begin to learn about a variety of occupations and consider the jobs they would like to do in the future.

Despite the school's best efforts, overall, pupil attendance rates are too low.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school has a shared vision for its curriculum, which seeks to foster positive and nurturing relationships throughout the school and wider community. Teachers have worked well with the local community to ensure that the history and culture of Cwmclydach and Wales are central to the pupils' learning experiences.

Staff have positive and caring relationships with pupils. They provide high levels of care and manage pupils' behaviour effectively across the school. Staff know their pupils well and adjust teaching approaches appropriately to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Teachers bring learning to life with visits and engaging experiences in school. For example, older pupils visit a science centre, which ignites their curiosity and builds their enthusiasm to learn. In addition, teachers make good use of the local environment and pupils' own lived experiences to support them to make connections with the world they live in. For example, pupils begin to develop an understanding of food production through their visit to a local farm.

Most teachers organise and use the indoor and outdoor learning environments effectively to support pupils' well-being. For example, staff in the specialist nurture class use the outdoor space well to provide structured play opportunities for pupils with ALN. This supports the development of their social and emotional skills well. However, across the school, learning environments do not always provide

opportunities for pupils to develop independence in learning. For example, in the younger classes, activities do not sufficiently enable pupils to explore their environment and investigate their own learning. For this age-group, on occasion activities are too adult-led. The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills. For example, the school uses a comprehensive system to develop pupils' understanding of the sounds letters make. However, approaches to develop pupils' writing skills across the school are underdeveloped. As a result, generally pupils make insufficient progress in writing.

Teachers use published schemes appropriately to support provision for the development of pupils' numeracy skills. Where this is most successful teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise their mental maths and to apply their skills in context. However, overall, there is a lack of consistency in approach across the school. As a result, too many pupils do not have rapid recall of number facts and this hinders their ability to apply their skills to solve problems.

Teachers use a wide range of resources to enable pupils to develop their digital skills effectively. Across the school, pupils are given good opportunities to develop their skills well such as when they learn how to use code. More able pupils benefit from opportunities to explore complex programming languages in partnership with a local university.

Staff are beginning to provide engaging opportunities that support pupils to widen their interests and skills. For example, the school provides a range of enterprise events where pupils build and develop their own online store. This supports them to develop an appropriate understanding of the world of work whilst also working with the local community. However, generally, teachers provide limited opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills across the curriculum.

Most staff model Welsh language effectively. They provide good language role models for pupils. Daily 'Helpwr Heddiw' sessions support pupils suitably to improve their spoken Welsh. Teachers liaise effectively with the local high school and this provides good opportunity for older pupils to develop their understanding of Spanish.

Teachers also ensure that the curriculum fully reflects local history and heritage. For example, pupils join residents to commemorate key events in history such as the Clydach Vale flood and the Cambrian Colliery disaster. Through this work, they develop a sense of cynefin. The school promotes cultural diversity suitably through a range of initiatives where pupils learn about famous role models such as Martin Luther King.

Many teachers build on pupils' prior learning suitably. They generally use questioning effectively to check pupil understanding and to move learning on. In the most successful lessons, teachers listen carefully to pupil responses and adjust their teaching to improve pupil learning. However, in a minority of lessons there are missed opportunities to challenge pupils' learning. Most teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback to improve their work. Teachers provide useful reports to parents about their child's progress.



## Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and highly inclusive community. Staff establish warm relationships with pupils and their families and this creates an ethos of trust and mutual respect. Staff know the pupils well and use a high level of skill and empathy to ensure that pupils feel safe and happy in school. The school's commitment to well-being is a notable feature of its work.

Provision for pupils with ALN is comprehensive. Teachers gather useful information about pupil needs through effective communication with pupils and their families. They use this effectively to plan appropriate support for pupils with ALN.

The school has robust systems that assess and identify pupils in need of additional support. Teachers and support staff use a range of strategies to identify academic or emotional needs. The ALN Coordinator monitors this information carefully and allocates appropriate support according to individual needs. Support staff deliver a range of learning interventions skilfully, enabling most pupils with ALN to make accelerated progress. The school specialist nurture class provides highly effective support for its pupils. Staff employ a range of worthwhile strategies to ensure that pupils feel welcome, secure and able to work toward their individual learning targets.

The school provides beneficial additional support to pupils with emotional and social needs. For example, highly trained staff provide opportunities for pupils to learn about and discuss their emotions. This helps them to regulate their feelings and to behave appropriately. In addition, staff provide a range of bespoke breakfast club sessions which supports pupils who are vulnerable to have a positive start to the day.

The school benefits from a variety of close links with outside agencies and professionals. For example, work with the local Flying Start setting provides useful support for pupils' transition into primary school.

Teachers use assemblies appropriately to provide opportunity for pupils to develop their understanding of the school's core values. This develops pupils' understanding of tolerance, respect and kindness successfully. For example, older pupils display strong levels of kindness through their work to teach older residents about digital technology. Regular opportunities for pupils to engage in collective worship and through links with a range of local churches contribute well to pupils' understanding of spirituality.

Staff ensure that pupils develop their physical fitness well through regular opportunities to exercise during the school day. Teachers plan a range of useful activities to raise pupils' awareness of eating healthily. For example, pupils develop a good understanding of the importance of fruit in your diet through their work to design and make healthy fruit kebabs.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as leaders and community members. For example, pupils participate with enthusiasm in the school's Criw Cymraeg. Their work effectively supports the promotion of Welsh language across the school. In addition, pupils regularly attend local sporting events and the choir performs as part of the Urdd Jamboree.

A strong feature of the school is its work to support families. For example, effective links with local organisations provide food donations, hampers and Christmas presents for those families in need. The school's family engagement officer works closely with all staff and families to provide appropriate support and build relationships. This includes the provision of worthwhile training sessions such as parenting classes and family courses.

The school promotes a positive culture of safeguarding. There are strong procedures in place to monitor and ensure the safety of all. Staff use robust strategies to monitor and track the attendance of all pupils including those who are persistently absent. However, despite this, the number of pupils persistently absent continues to be a concern for the school.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides strong, compassionate leadership and has a clear vision for school improvement. She works closely with all stakeholders to develop a highly inclusive ethos that permeates the whole school. Families value the effective communication and support that they receive from the school.

The school adopts a community focused approach to its work. Leaders forge strong relationships with pupils, parents and the wider community and this enables staff to identify any potential barriers to learning. They use this information well to mitigate the impact of issues such as poverty. For example, the school provides its own food bank 'Y Pantry' to support families in need. The family engagement officer provides valuable support for families signposting them to advice and help from a range of agencies.

Despite a period of instability in teaching, the headteacher and governing body have suitable strategies in place to overcome challenges. For example, the recent appointment of an acting deputy headteacher has strengthened the school's leadership capacity.

Leaders provide high levels of support to all staff to support them with their roles and responsibilities. School performance management systems and a detailed programme of professional learning ensure that the school team receive appropriate training related to school improvement priorities and their individual training needs. The headteacher provides effective coaching and mentoring to staff as means of improving their practice further. For example, staff across the school have improved their behaviour management skills following whole staff training. As a result, the standard of pupils' behaviour across the school is strong.

The headteacher works with all staff to gain a clear understanding of pupil progress. Regular pupil progress meetings support leaders appropriately to determine strategies to support pupils at risk of underachievement. The school carefully monitors the progress of vulnerable pupils including those with ALN and from low-income households. Leaders liaise carefully with staff to adjust the provision for these pupils appropriately.

The headteacher, senior leaders and other staff work collectively through an appropriate process of self-evaluation. Leaders and governors use a range of

evidence well to inform their evaluations. As a result, they have a clear understanding of school strengths and areas for improvement. There are appropriate strategies in place to bring about school improvement. For example, effective use is made of the Pupil Development Grant to provide support for pupils with speech and language difficulties.

Governors provide strong support and are passionate about working with the whole school community. They work closely with staff on a regular basis through visits to school and meetings with staff. This ensures that they have a good understanding of school strengths and areas for improvement. They play an active role in supporting the headteacher to gather evidence to monitor the impact of strategic actions. For example, an attendance committee supports governors effectively to understand the school's strategies to improve attendance.

Governors have a good knowledge of both local and national priorities such as the school's work to develop its curriculum in line with Curriculum for Wales. The headteacher works with governors effectively to monitor and manage school finances and to ensure that there is a positive culture of safeguarding. Governors ensure that there are appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders collaborate well with a range of local, regional and national organisations to provide additional benefits to the school community. For example, the school's work with a local trust sourced additional funding leading to improvements in outdoor learning provision. Leaders also have beneficial links with local schools. This supports transition arrangements between the school and other settings appropriately and provides staff with good opportunities to discuss and share practice. Partnership work with a range of external partners supports the strong management of the school's specialist nurture class.

## 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](http://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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