



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

**A report on**

**Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary**

**Oakdale  
Blackwood  
NP12 0NA**

**Date of inspection: February 2024**

**by**

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

## About Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary

Name of provider	Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	614
Pupils of statutory school age	463
Number in nursery classes	78
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 23.7%)	13.5%
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 13.2%)	14.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2014
Start date of inspection	05/02/2024

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

Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary School is a positive, community focused learning environment where the well-being and safeguarding of pupils and staff is a priority. School leaders and staff work to promote a vision that focuses on striving to ensure that all pupils are happy, healthy, and safe. As a result, pupils have high levels of well-being across the school. Nearly all pupils behave well in class and at playtimes and they are proud of their school. The working relationships between pupils as well as with staff demonstrate strong levels of trust and mutual respect.

Senior leaders work well to evaluate the school's strengths and identify areas for improvement. Senior leaders and staff work collaboratively to improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences and to ensure that pupils make progress. The school provides effective support for pupils' social and emotional needs.

Leaders monitor the impact of the school's work and work with staff to ensure that pupils successfully engage in school life and learning. However, assessment and progress information are not used effectively enough to identify and plan for next steps in all pupils' learning.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematical skills. They talk enthusiastically about their learning. Teachers provide suitable feedback that encourages pupils to respond to questions or correct their work. However, pupils have limited opportunities to improve their work or influence what and how they learn. Generally, most lessons are teacher led and do not support pupils to become independent and reflective learners.

The school makes good use of its extensive outdoor areas. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activity. The school offers an inclusive and extensive range of after-school clubs, which are well attended by pupils of all ages.

## Recommendations

- R1 Further develop a whole-school shared understanding of progression to ensure that teachers' planning and feedback meet the needs of all pupils
- R2 Improve pupils' independent learning skills, including opportunities for them to reflect on and make decisions about their learning, and use teacher feedback appropriately to understand their next steps in learning

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

During their time in school, most pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make strong progress and use their knowledge and skills in their work across the curriculum effectively. Most pupils identified as having an additional learning need (ALN) make suitable progress from their individual starting points.

Across the school, pupils' speaking and listening skills are strong. Nearly all pupils listen well, pay close attention to each other's point of view, and make effective contributions to conversations. They express themselves clearly from an early age and talk enthusiastically about their work. Most of the oldest pupils speak articulately and confidently for a wide range of purposes. They moderate their tone, expression and language depending on the audience.

The youngest pupils handle books appropriately. Reception pupils develop a good understanding of letters and sounds and use this knowledge to begin to build simple words. By Year 2, most pupils develop effective reading skills to read with increasing independence. Most older pupils become confident readers who use a range of reading skills, such as skimming and scanning texts to locate and extract information. Most pupils have a love of reading and express their reading preferences with enthusiasm.

Most pupils make good progress in their writing. The youngest pupils develop their early writing skills effectively when mark making using a variety of tools. As they get older, most pupils write using suitable sentence structures and use basic punctuation accurately. Generally, pupils apply their writing skills across the curriculum effectively. By Year 6 most pupils write successfully for a range of purposes. For example, when writing an imaginative recount of their visit to Mars they describe their experiences skilfully, varying their use of sentence structures for impact. However, pupils do not consistently edit their work to improve their writing.

Most pupils' Welsh language skills are beginning to develop suitably. A majority of younger pupils respond appropriately to simple Welsh phrases and vocabulary. They sing Welsh songs enthusiastically. Year 2 pupils respond to the class *Helpwr Heddiw* using familiar words and phrases to give details when ordering their lunch. However, as pupils move through the school, their progress slows and, by Year 6, many pupils find responding to more complex questions difficult.

Nearly all pupils develop a strong understanding of mathematical concepts and apply their skills across the curriculum successfully. Reception pupils sequence pictures in order of size accurately. Year 1 and 2 pupils begin to use a range of strategies to solve simple addition and subtraction problems and count money using pounds and pence. In Years 3 and 4, most pupils consolidate and apply their addition and subtraction skills to compare varying lengths accurately using different units of measure. The oldest pupils' understanding of complex number concepts develops appropriately. They apply their mathematical skills well, for example when creating accurate line graphs to compare the average temperatures in Wales and the Arctic.

Most pupils develop their digital skills appropriately. The youngest pupils use programmable toys to plan a route for the three bears through the forest. Older year groups successfully use coding to create games, move images across a screen and instruct small circuit boards to smile and frown. They use a range of programs to write information texts. For example, Year 6 create presentations to share with the class, based on the Bristol bus riots. However, pupils' use of spreadsheets and databases is underdeveloped.

Across the school, pupils' physical skills develop well. The youngest pupils develop their skills rapidly through a range of purposeful activities including riding trikes, climbing on large apparatus, and throwing balls and bean bags into buckets. Year 2 pupils build on these skills suitably and develop their co-ordination and control when bouncing and catching balls. Older pupils move quickly, change direction, and improve their balance during gymnastics.

Most pupils develop their creative skills across a range of genres, including art, poetry and performing arts. They use a variety of media appropriately when experimenting with line, shape, and colour. Year 6 pupils co-ordinate and control their creative movements in time with music during dance. When given the opportunities to work independently and think freely, pupils develop their curiosity and thinking skills well.

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

During their time in school, nearly all pupils develop positive working relationships with staff and respectful friendships with each other. Many pupils feel safe at school and know who to turn to if they need help. Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of the school's expectations of behaviour and, as a result, most pupils are courteous and polite to staff and visitors. When needed, they develop and use suitable strategies to regulate and re-focus on their learning.

Most pupils enjoy learning, generally listen well and participate appropriately in lessons. They enjoy working together, sharing ideas and happily take turns. For example, older pupils work collaboratively to create their own stop action movies. They are often proud of their work and keen to share their learning with visitors. Most pupils value and understand the verbal feedback they receive in their lessons. However, on occasion, pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their learning, formulate their own ideas or identify their next steps in learning. During lessons where teachers and support staff provide too much support and direction, a few pupils do not develop their independence skills effectively.

Most pupils have a strong awareness of how to stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking water, and having an active lifestyle. For example, younger pupils create a healthy basket for Red Riding Hood to take to her granny. However, a majority of older pupils make unhealthy choices with morning snacks. Nearly all pupils participate in healthy activities including team games, swimming, and gymnastics while many pupils enjoy extra-curricular activities, including rugby, football and netball.

Most pupils develop well as ethical and knowledgeable citizens. For example, older pupils maturely discuss the impact of the Chartist movement in influencing voting

rights. Most pupils enjoy celebrating their own culture and language and that of their peers and have an appropriate understanding of what it is like to live in modern day Wales. They demonstrate a broad understanding of cultural diversity through their study of different faiths. This leads to pupils showing respect for the beliefs of others and understanding that they live in a multi-cultural society.

Most pupils play well together and interact in a friendly manner with adults at break and lunchtimes. They enjoy learning in the outdoor areas including the school forest area. This supports their learning and well-being effectively. For example, younger pupils collaborate well to collect natural materials to make shelters for the three bears. Many pupils feel safe in school and have a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe online. For example, most pupils know not to share their passwords with others.

Nearly all pupils have high levels of trust in staff, and they are content to discuss any worries they may have. Pupils take on leadership roles enthusiastically. Members of the School Council and Criw Cymraeg are actively involved in school wide decision-making. For example, pupils in the School Council successfully petitioned the local council to provide a multi sports games area following the loss of their school field.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Staff develop positive, caring, and respectful relationships with pupils. Teachers and skilled teaching assistants support pupils' learning effectively. They encourage respect and understanding, which leads to an inclusive and considerate culture. Staff's expertise in supporting pupils' emotional well-being enables them to sensitively support pupils through the challenges they face daily. Provision for emotional well-being development is a strength and most pupils make good progress in developing strategies to understand and manage their emotions well.

The school is beginning to develop a broad and balanced curriculum that develops the context of the school, aspects of Wales and the wider world appropriately. Teachers ensure that pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and well-being skills progressively as they move through the school. Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations of pupils and enable them to apply skills appropriately across the curriculum. They plan topics related to pupils' interests. For example, in the younger classes, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn about the lifecycle of a lamb and display their findings on a digital platform.

School staff foster a strong Welsh ethos, which helps pupils to feel proud to be Welsh. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about people and events which shape Welsh culture and heritage. For example, pupils in Year 2 work in the style of a Welsh artist to represent the key features of their local village.

The school's work to develop pupils' Welsh language speaking skills is at an early stage. Nearly all teachers use basic Welsh language appropriately in the classroom, for example to give instructions to their pupils. However, they do not support pupils to develop their Welsh language skills sufficiently well over time and older pupils are reluctant to hold simple conversations.

Teachers plan engaging activities that enable pupils to discover the experiences of people from a variety of ethnic minority communities in Wales and the wider world and those of LGBTQ+ people. For example, in the 'Power and Protest' topic, older pupils carry out research on influential activists such as Rosa Parks.

Teachers create calm and welcoming classroom environments. Most teaching across the school is effective and teachers have a secure knowledge of the concepts and skills they are teaching. Most teachers deliver well-organised and purposeful lessons to engage and inspire the pupils. They provide suitable criteria to support pupils to successfully complete their work. They provide clear learning objectives and expectations to support pupils when learning new skills. Where strategies are most effective, teachers develop success criteria with pupils and encourage pupils to reflect on their work. However, in many classes, feedback is not effective enough in enabling pupils to identify their next steps in learning or what they need to do to improve.

Many teachers provide pupils with beneficial opportunities to build on previous learning. For example, at the start of topics, teachers find out what the pupils already know and what they would like to learn. In a few instances teachers plan opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas, apply and practise their skills by making choices about what and how they learn. For example, older pupils gather information about race protests and decide how best to present this. However, across the school, opportunities for pupils to be involved in creating learning experiences across the curriculum or to suggest how they learn are limited.

The school's assessment approaches provide useful information that enable leaders to monitor pupils' progress across the curriculum. Teachers' use of this information to plan for pupils next steps in learning is variable. In a majority of classes, teachers ensure that pupils consistently receive an appropriate level of challenge or support. However, in a minority of classes, teachers do not plan work sufficiently well to meet the needs of all pupils.

Teachers provide appropriate opportunities to develop pupils' digital skills across the curriculum, for example through animation and coding programs. However, these opportunities do not build pupils' skills systematically enough to secure progression over time.

### **Care, support and guidance**

Staff at Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary School create a caring community for pupils and their families. The supportive and friendly working relationships between staff and pupils is a strength of the school. This is reflected in nearly all pupils' good behaviour and their positive attitudes towards their learning and school life. Senior leaders develop strong links with the local community and organise beneficial opportunities for parents to take part in events and workshops. This enables them to support their child's learning at home effectively.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is a strength. The effective ALN co-ordinators work with class teachers to assess pupils' needs at an early stage and devise valuable pupil profiles where appropriate. These include setting achievable targets and using teaching approaches that support pupils to

make progress. Staff monitor and evaluate the progress that pupils make in achieving these targets regularly. Where appropriate, additional outside agencies such as health services and the education psychologist provide further support for school staff. As a result, during their time at the school, most pupils with ALN make suitable progress.

Staff create inclusive learning environments and safe spaces for pupils to explore their senses and communicate their emotions and feelings. As a result, the support for pupils with social and emotional needs is highly effective.

Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on values, and the beliefs of others. They plan thoughtful opportunities for pupils to learn about different countries and cultures. Older pupils benefit from opportunities to share their own cultures and traditions. The school promotes diversity and inclusion well, celebrating through artwork. For example, pupils present their understanding of fairness through 'protest art' and create artwork to promote anti-racism effectively. All pupils, including those affected by socio-economic disadvantage, benefit from trips and visitors to the school, which deepens pupils' understanding of the wider world successfully.

The school positively promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development. Staff encourage pupils to consider others' views sensitively and demonstrate values such as truth and respect. Staff provide many opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activity sessions, both in lessons and extra-curricular clubs, such as rugby and dance. The well-equipped outdoor areas, help motivate pupils to keep fit and to develop their physical skills well.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles through influential groups, such as the Heddlu Bach, which offers advice and support to pupils at playtime. Pupils in the Pupil Leadership Group are passionate about their role and campaign for change enthusiastically. In these roles, pupils develop leadership skills effectively and, as a result, feel that the school values their ideas and opinions.

The school has pupils' well-being and safety at its heart. There is a strong safeguarding ethos, and all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for keeping learners safe. All staff use effective strategies to promote and support a culture of anti-bullying and positive attitudes towards managing behaviour. The school has robust strategies in place for promoting pupils' attendance and punctuality. Staff work effectively with parents and outside agencies to address any persistent absenteeism.

### **Leadership and management**

Leaders and governors at Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary School have worked successfully with parents, pupils and staff to create the school's vision of raising aspirations for pupils, while providing them with the skills they need to be successful in their adult lives. The school has strong links with the community and staff are proud of the family atmosphere they have created.

The headteacher provides clear strategic direction for school improvement. He has a clear ambition for the school to focus closely on pupils' well-being and on ensuring



high expectations for what pupils learn and achieve. He knows staff strengths well and has created a team of leaders at all levels who model professional values and behaviour and take responsibility for improving important aspects of the school's work.

Senior leaders have established a culture of self-evaluation that is embedded into the daily life of the school. The processes in place are generally effective in supporting staff to identify the school's strengths and its priorities for improvement appropriately. They work with governors to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. However, leaders do not ensure that teachers use assessments of pupils' progress effectively enough to plan for pupils next steps in learning.

The school addresses local and national priorities appropriately, including additional learning needs reform and curriculum development. Leaders and teachers have worked collaboratively to develop a curriculum that reflects many of the principles of Curriculum for Wales.

Leaders have embedded a positive culture of professional learning for all staff. Senior leaders regularly monitor performance of staff and support their development with agreed targets. Leaders identify and share areas of good practice within the school. For example, the literacy curriculum lead successfully models a new phonics programme to other staff to ensure consistency in its implementation.

School leaders work successfully and collaboratively with a range of outside agencies, for example, their partnership work with Initial Teacher Education providers is highly effective. Leaders and school staff recognise the benefits of this partnership in providing teachers with opportunities to reflect and improve their own practice.

On the whole, the governing body fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. However, they acknowledge that there are inconsistencies the school's approach to promoting pupils' healthy eating and drinking and have plans to address these. Governors bring a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience, which they use well to support the school. Governors understand their responsibility in safeguarding pupils and support leaders to promote a strong culture of safeguarding. Link governors work closely with school staff to develop a good understanding of curriculum developments and the school's budget.

The school's finances are managed well. Leaders and governors ensure that school improvement priorities are suitably resourced. This enables the school to maintain the worthwhile support for vulnerable pupils. The pupil development grant is used effectively to support the additional learning needs and emotional needs of pupils affected by socio-economic disadvantage.

## 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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