



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

A report on

The Twyn School

**East View
Caerphilly
CF83 1UT**

Date of inspection: May 2024

by

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

About The Twyn School

Name of provider	The Twyn School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	n/a
Number of pupils on roll	457
Pupils of statutory school age	347
Number in nursery classes	60
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%)	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 13.2%)	12.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/07/2016
Start date of inspection	07/05/2024

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

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

Overview

Twyn Primary School provides an inclusive and nurturing environment. Staff foster positive relationships and create a warm, supportive and friendly environment where pupils are happy and feel safe. School leaders and staff work to promote a vision that has a strong focus on well-being and emotional support and, as a result, pupils engage enthusiastically in lessons and behave well.

The school's provision for well-being is a strength. A wide range of thoughtful and responsive interventions are well embedded and have considerable impact on pupils' social and emotional skills. Skilled staff use 'The Den' nurture room effectively with individuals and groups to address their social, emotional, and learning needs by removing barriers to learning and providing a safe space away from busy classrooms. The school provides effective support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and as a result they make suitable progress during their time in school.

Across the school the quality of teaching is variable. In a majority of classes, where the teaching is effective, pupils make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and they make suitable progress from their starting points. However, leaders have not monitored the impact of teaching carefully enough to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

The school is beginning to develop its curriculum appropriately and is providing a range of engaging learning experiences for pupils. However, there is not sufficient focus on developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding systematically and progressively as they move through the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve self-evaluation processes and ensure that they influence improvement priorities more effectively
- R2 Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching to ensure that all pupils are challenged and supported consistently
- R3 Ensure that the curriculum supports all pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically and progressively

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at the school, many pupils make good progress in developing their personal and social skills and a majority of pupils make suitable progress in the development of their reading and oracy skills. However, pupils' progress in other areas is often slowed due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and a lack of curriculum structure. Many pupils with additional learning needs make useful progress towards their individual goals.

Across the school, many pupils speak confidently to adults and to each other. In the Reception classes, many pupils share their ideas and preferences thoughtfully, such as their favourite mini beast. They give simple but clear explanations for their choices. Most older pupils listen to others considerately and hold discussions in groups productively. By Year 6, many pupils discuss their learning using an appropriate vocabulary. For example, pupils describe in detail how they are creating a website for younger pupils with interesting information about the Paris Olympics.

Many younger pupils develop their early reading skills successfully. They use their understanding of letters and sounds to read simple words appropriately, for instance when identifying letters floating in the water tray. By Year 2, many pupils choose reading materials independently and give reasonable explanations for their choices. They read a range of suitable texts with increasing accuracy and fluency. Many recall information from texts they have read in useful detail, for instance when discussing *Fantastic Mr Fox*. Many older pupils read, with fluency and accuracy. By Year 6, they infer information from texts well, for instance identifying the ways in which authors use speech to signal to the reader how a character is feeling.

As they move through the school, many pupils develop their writing skills appropriately. Younger pupils write short words and phrases suitably. In Year 2, many pupils write simply in a range of styles, such as diary entries and stories. Most organise their writing well so that it makes sense to the reader. However, a minority still struggle to use capital letters and full stops accurately and consistently. By Year 6, many pupils write short descriptive passages using interesting vocabulary well. Most choose appropriate vocabulary and present their writing neatly. A few begin to use paragraphs to structure their work suitably. However, older pupils do not write well enough in a broad range of styles or have sufficient opportunities to write across the curriculum. A minority do not spell or punctuate well and a few still use incorrect grammar.

Many pupils begin to develop a basic understanding of Welsh quickly on entering school, for instance greeting others saying, 'bore da'. In Year 1 and Year 2, most pupils describe colours in Welsh, and count to 20 independently. As they move through the school, they develop an understanding of a few more sentences and phrases. For example, many pupils talk confidently about the weather and express their likes and dislikes simply. However, overall, pupils do not make sufficient progress in developing their Welsh speaking skills.

Across the school, many pupils develop their number skills suitably. Younger pupils begin to count confidently, for instance when counting items in the sand tray. In Year 1, many pupils recognise and order 2-digit numbers accurately and begin to understand how to count in groups of two. By Year 2, a majority are starting to count in 2s, 5s and 10s and read and write numbers to 100. However, pupils often struggle to apply their understanding in practical situations. Older pupils continue to make appropriate progress in developing their number skills. For example, many have a good recall of multiplication and division facts. Many pupils understand and use coordinates accurately, for instance to make a plan of trees to be planted in the playground. However, a majority of pupils have too little understanding of other areas of mathematics, such as how to construct and analyse graphs. They often struggle to transfer their mathematical skills to a variety of different contexts and have too few opportunities to do so.

Many pupils develop a few basic digital skills competently. For example, many pupils in Year 2 use apps to make simple graphs to show the number of different types of shop in the local shopping area. By Year 5 most pupils create simple stop-start animations thoughtfully. In Year 6, pupils work collaboratively to create a website about the Paris Olympics to share with younger pupils. A very few pupils have a strong enough understanding of areas, such as coding, spreadsheets or databases but overall, pupils' digital skills do not develop well enough.

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. They know who to turn to if they need help and they have a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe online. 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 their emotions and re-focus on their learning.

Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons, when moving around the school, during group work and at break and lunch times. They play well together and enjoy working together, sharing ideas and happily take turns. For example, older pupils work collaboratively to create their own stop action movies and younger pupils cooperate well when sharing play equipment. They are often proud of their work and keen to share their learning with visitors. However, when lessons do not engage them successfully, a very few pupils become distracted and lose focus.

Many pupils persevere well when finding tasks difficult and know where to access support. 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 independent learning 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, pupils in Year 5 describe the impact of dance on securing positive mental health and well-being. 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. The oldest pupils engage in discussions about current issues. For example, Year 6 pupils confidently discuss the notion of power and control and its use in a range of lawful and unlawful situations. A minority of pupils extend discussions and ideas further by linking this theme to recent events, such as the use of mobile phones and social media by young people.

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.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop leadership skills through a range of well-established pupil leadership roles. Nearly all pupils feel adults in school listen to their views and take these into account in decisions that affect them. Pupil leadership groups work proactively in developing key areas across the school. For example, they organise events to raise money to support school improvement priorities, such as developing outdoor learning areas.

Teaching and learning experiences

Relationships across the school are good. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well. Most teachers establish routines well, which enables the pupils to settle to work quickly. Staff encourage respect and understanding, this leads to an inclusive and considerate culture. Staff expertise in supporting pupils' emotional well-being is highly effective in sensitively helping pupils through the challenges they may face. Overall, the school's 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 working towards developing a balanced curriculum that is adapted to the needs of its pupils. Teachers involve pupils thoughtfully in planning and developing learning activities to include in class topics. For example, older pupils decide what to research and include on their website when learning about the Olympics. This helps to ensure that learning is engaging and relevant to pupils' interests. However, the curriculum does not support pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically or progressively well enough. As a result, pupils sometimes repeat learning needlessly while not making sufficient progress in other important areas. The school's implementation of Curriculum for Wales remains at an early stage of development.

Staff create calm and welcoming indoor and outdoor learning environments and when used effectively these offer rich learning opportunities. Interactions between adults and pupils are positive, nurturing and relaxed. Staff in the younger classes work well as a team and, where provision is well planned and authentic, pupils develop and practice skills successfully. However, this is inconsistent across these

classes with an overuse of worksheets and activities that do not challenge or develop pupils' skills well enough.

In the Year 3 to Year 6 classes, a few teachers are beginning to develop rich learning experiences that engage pupils successfully. Where teaching is most effective, teachers plan activities that are stimulating, use a range of skills and are appropriately adapted to meet all pupils needs. In these classes, they ask suitable questions to check pupil understanding and the pace of lessons enables many pupils to make good progress. For example, older pupils develop and expand their descriptive language well by using metaphors, personification and similes to describe Caerphilly Castle. However, a majority of teachers in the older classes do not consistently use a wide enough range of effective teaching methods. Too often, these lessons are overly structured and directed by the teachers, with few opportunities for pupils to direct their own learning or develop independent learning skills.

Across the school, teachers do not use assessment to inform teaching and learning effectively and pupils are often unclear about the purpose of their learning. The level of challenge or pace of learning does not always match pupils' developmental needs well enough. Teachers generally provide too much scaffolding to support pupils' learning. This limits their development as resilient, independent learners. The feedback that teachers provide for pupils is often ineffective in providing pupils with enough clarity about what they are doing well, what they can improve or how to make those improvements.

Overall, provision to support pupils to develop their reading skills is effective and leaders have begun to set in place structures to help teachers plan and develop pupils' writing skills, such as their understanding of punctuation. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills are too inconsistent. For example, pupils have too few opportunities to develop their writing and numeracy skills in a wide enough range of contexts. Provision for developing pupils' digital skills is weak. This means that many pupils do not develop this area of their learning well enough.

The school has suitable, progressive plans to support teachers to structure pupils' Welsh language development. However, teachers do not always use these well enough or give pupils sufficient opportunities to speak Welsh regularly enough. As a result, pupils' Welsh language skills do not progress well enough across classes. Teachers plan a beneficial range of opportunities to help pupils develop an effective understanding of Welsh culture and history. For example, the school's highly engaging 'Cynefin' project supported pupils to understand more fully the history of the local area and what education in Wales looked like a hundred years ago.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum helps pupils to learn about the diverse range of people that they may meet throughout their lives. For example, work with a local football club and a national charity helps pupils to understand the importance of valuing all others and raises awareness of ongoing homophobia and transphobia in sport. The school's beneficial focus on the history and culture of those from communities, such as the Windrush generation, helps pupils to develop a broader cultural awareness and a more inclusive worldview.

Care, support and guidance

Staff at Twyn Primary School create a caring community for pupils and their families. The supportive and friendly working relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. This is reflected in nearly all pupils' good behaviour and their positive attitudes towards their learning and school life.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is effective. The ALN co-ordinators work successfully with class teachers and support staff 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 educational psychologist provide further support for school staff. As a result, during their time at the school, most pupils with ALN make suitable progress.

Across the school, staff create inclusive learning environments and safe spaces for pupils to explore their senses and communicate their emotions and feelings. This helps to ensure that the support for pupils with social and emotional needs is highly effective.

Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on their values, and the beliefs of others. They plan thoughtful opportunities for pupils to learn about different countries and cultures. The school promotes diversity and inclusion well, celebrating through dance, art and poetry. For example, older pupils study the work and life of Sonia Boyce OBE, an artist and teacher. All pupils, including those affected by socio-economic disadvantage, benefit from trips and visitors to the school, which deepen 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 kindness and respect. Staff promote physical and emotional health effectively with many opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activity sessions, both in lessons and extra-curricular clubs, such as rugby and dance. They use the outdoor areas well to motivate pupils to keep fit and to develop their physical skills.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles through pupil leadership groups, such as the Heddlu Bach. Their work involves working with the school community to improve and raise awareness of educational and community environments, for example encouraging safer parking around the school at the end of the day. As a result, pupil leadership groups are passionate about their roles and campaign for change enthusiastically.

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.

Leadership and management

The headteacher places well-being at the heart of the school's vision. School leaders work successfully to create a school ethos that is inclusive and focuses on the development of happy and successful children. Together, leaders have fostered a caring and supportive school community. The school's well-being strategy has had a positive impact on pupils' engagement with, and enjoyment of, learning. Leaders model and promote professional values and behaviours successfully. Promoting and maintaining a strong culture of safeguarding and high levels of well-being for all pupils is at the forefront of the school's work. Governors and staff across the school understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

There is a strong culture of collaboration and teamwork throughout the school. Staff are hardworking and supportive of one another and, as a result, staff well-being is a strength. Overall, communication with parents and their involvement in the life of the school is effective. For example, the parent association has contributed significant funds to the development of the school's outdoor environment. The school collaborates closely with parents and the wider community. It works well to support families, for example by subsidising the cost of educational visits with the money raised through school events and by offering payment plans for trips.

School leaders place appropriate emphasis on addressing local and national priorities such as supporting pupil well-being, the provision for ALN, and improving attendance. On the whole, leaders identify accurately the school strengths and areas for development. However, leaders do not use monitoring and evaluating processes well enough to identify important areas that require improvement such as the quality of teaching and learning and the progressive development of skills. Leaders identify too many priorities for school improvement and as a result, the focus on improving a specific area of practice over time is not effective enough in bringing about improvement.

The school has appropriate arrangements to support the professional learning of staff. These arrangements have had a significant impact on the training of staff in securing improvement in provision and the quality of teaching and learning of ALN pupils. However, leaders do not link professional development closely enough to improving the quality of teaching and learning or to securing effective outcomes for all pupils.

Governors are supportive and committed to the school community. They fulfil their statutory role in respect of healthy eating and drinking and are knowledgeable about the school's approaches to this. They have a good understanding of the school's finances and bring professional expertise to carry out their role as a critical friend and to ensure that financial resources are used effectively. However, the governing body's role in self-evaluation is underdeveloped and relies too heavily on the information provided by school leaders. As a result, governors do not have a complete picture of pupils' progress.

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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