



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

A report on

Plasyfelin Primary

**Lewis Drive
Churchill Park
CF83 3FT**

Date of inspection: June 2024

by

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

About Plasyfelin Primary

Name of provider	Plasyfelin Primary
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	312
Pupils of statutory school age	234
Number in nursery classes	28
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%)	36.8%
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 13.2%)	3.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	5.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	05/04/2010
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	16/05/2016
Start date of inspection	10/06/2024

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

Plasyfelin Primary school provides a welcoming, nurturing environment where strong relationships between pupils, staff and parents generate a warm, friendly atmosphere for learning. As a result, most pupils make good progress from their starting points. The consistent sensitivity and respect shown by staff towards their pupils is reflected in pupils' kindness towards their peers and in the excellent standard of behaviour across the school. Staff know their pupils well and meet their individual needs effectively. There is a strong culture of safeguarding that supports pupils to feel happy and safe at school. Support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is a strength of the school.

Teachers provide a variety of learning experiences that are increasingly linked to real life contexts. These enable pupils to develop their skills and build their knowledge and understanding appropriately over time, although opportunities for pupils to use their writing and numeracy skills are at an earlier stage of development. Teaching supports many aspects of pupils' development and learning effectively. However, in general, teachers tend to over direct pupils' learning and do not always provide sufficient challenge or opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills. Teachers' feedback does not support pupils to know what their next steps in learning are effectively enough.

Over time, leaders have created an effective team ethos amongst staff which is built on positive relationships, trust and collaboration. School leaders address national priorities well and have developed a clear vision for the school with well-being at its heart. This is well understood by all members of the school community. Leaders make suitable use of first-hand evidence to evaluate much of the school's work. However, they do not focus closely enough on evaluating the difference that the school's provision makes to pupils' learning.

Leaders have established effective relationships with parents and the wider school community, which underpins the positive and supportive ethos at the school. Governors provide the school with purposeful support and undertake many of their roles diligently, such as monitoring the school's finances. They know the staff, pupils and families well and maintain open and productive communication with all.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that leaders evaluate the school's provision and the impact of improvement strategies by considering the difference they make to pupils' experiences and progress
- R2 Strengthen the curriculum to ensure that it engages and challenges all pupils effectively and helps them develop the full range of skills, particularly in writing and numeracy across the curriculum
- R3 Develop aspects of teaching so that it provides appropriate challenge and supports pupils to respond to feedback and 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

Most pupils enter the school with skills below the expected level for their age. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with ALN, those with English as an additional language and those eligible for free school meals, make good progress in their learning from their starting points.

Across the school, most pupils are confident speakers and nearly all pupils are attentive when listening to their teachers and classmates. The youngest pupils develop their listening and speaking skills well. They communicate their ideas clearly to adults and each other and enjoy discussing, for example how they made their 'spider rolls' as part of their project on minibeasts. As they progress through the school, nearly all pupils' language skills develop effectively. For example, Year 2 pupils use subject specific vocabulary when undertaking a survey of minibeasts. Nearly all older pupils develop a varied and interesting spoken vocabulary. By the time they are in Year 6, they discuss a range of relevant topics intelligently, such as whether the use of mobile phones in schools should be banned.

Most younger pupils use strategies successfully to support their development as readers, for instance they use their knowledge of phonic blends to help them to read unfamiliar words. By Year 6, most pupils read a variety of texts competently. They locate and extract information from a variety of sources and use this information to support class discussions effectively.

Many pupils develop their writing skills appropriately. Younger pupils progress from early mark making to spelling and writing phonetically plausible words. By Year 2, many write in simple sentences for example, when they create a fact file about the painter, Kandinsky. Generally, they present their work appropriately. A minority of older pupils choose language suitably for effect and adapt their writing style to suit the purpose of the task. For example, they use features of an explanation text successfully to promote healthy eating. The oldest pupils show a consistent grasp of language and use interesting vocabulary to create empathy when writing at length. However, as pupils move through the school, they do not use these skills in their work across the curriculum often enough.

During their time at school, most pupils develop secure mathematical knowledge and skills. Many of the youngest pupils count and form numbers up to 10. By Year 2, most pupils have a secure knowledge of number facts to 100, add and subtract two-digit numbers and collect data in a tally chart and represent this data on a block graph. By Year 4, many pupils use their skills to solve a range of word-based problems involving money. Most of the oldest pupils work confidently to make nets of

Three-dimensional shapes, demonstrating an understanding of mathematical terminology. They have a clear understanding of manipulating numbers beyond 1 million. However, their ability to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum is less well developed.

Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning Welsh. Younger pupils describe the weather and are beginning to talk about their feelings using simple sentences. Older pupils respond appropriately to questions about their family and hobbies and extend their sentences to give reasons for their answers. By Year 6, many pupils show an appropriate understanding of spoken language in familiar situations.

Across the school, nearly all pupils recognise the need to be safe online. Younger pupils use a range of devices safely, for example when sending emails as a response to communication they have received. By Year 2, pupils use different programmes effectively creating stop frame animations and short recordings of the work they have completed. As pupils progress through the school, they develop their digital skills appropriately, creating interactive presentations and use their coding skills to create their own games. Older pupils use their reading skills effectively when making effective use of online research and digital platforms to gather relevant information.

Most younger pupils develop balance skills as they ride bikes and move between different apparatus in the outdoor area. They develop their fine motor skills successfully through opportunities such as painting, threading, building and small world play. Most pupils respond positively to opportunities to take part in dance and action songs. Older pupils enthusiastically take part in a wide range of sporting activities including swimming, netball and athletics. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of exercise on maintaining their health and well-being.

Most pupils develop their creative skills well and engage enthusiastically with a wide range of creative activities, including painting, poetry and music. For example, younger pupils experiment with colour and texture when studying different artists. Older pupils experiment with tone and pitch when playing musical instruments.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy positive relationships with staff and their peers. Nearly all pupils feel safe, happy and well supported at school. They know who to talk to if they have a problem and are confident that staff will deal quickly and effectively with any concerns they have.

Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well and treat one another with care and consideration. They speak confidently and politely to adults and visitors. They move through the school calmly and manage transitions within the school day very well. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of rules and sanctions and how these support positive relationships. They thrive on the encouragement and praise from staff and appreciate recognition of their hard work and positive behaviour.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and engage well in their lessons. They talk about school life, their personal interests and the activities they enjoy with enthusiasm. The youngest pupils express themselves confidently whilst undertaking a range of activities in both the classroom and outdoor area. Many older pupils express their views with increasing maturity. For example, they explain how they have devised strategies to reduce the amount of plastic generated in the school and how they use the polytunnels in the allotment area to grow fruit and vegetables.

Most pupils work well in pairs and small groups. Younger pupils share their resources willingly, and older pupils work collaboratively on a range of activities, for example to develop their research skills when learning about Charles Darwin and the Galapagos Islands. When given responsibility for their learning, many pupils demonstrate suitable levels of independence and ambition. They try their best, working with sustained concentration and perseverance. For example, older pupils work diligently to make the nets of three-dimensional shapes, and identify which characteristics make a cube or cuboid. However, opportunities for pupils to develop independence in their work is limited at times by over directed teaching. Overall, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities or support to enable pupils to understand how to use feedback to improve their work.

Most pupils understand the importance of being healthy. They explain that exercise is good for them and that attending after school clubs, such as, table tennis, football, and multisport can help them keep fit. A few pupils represent the schools in competitive activities. Most pupils have a good understanding of online safety and the need to keep their personal information to themselves. Pupils including those with ALN take their leadership roles seriously and carry out their duties with enthusiasm. Members of groups such as School Council and Eco Warriors demonstrate maturity in expressing views on important aspects of school life. They make sound suggestions to ensure the planned new school building will be eco-friendly, for example, by suggesting the inclusion of electric vehicle charging points and solar panels.

Many pupils who have English as an additional language are language ambassadors and teach their language and aspects of their culture to their peers. This promotes their sense of belonging, and helps pupils develop a strong understanding of equality and diversity and the need to treat everyone with respect.

Rates of attendance are beginning to improve slightly. However, as a group, the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is notably lower than that of their peers.

Teaching and learning experiences

Staff establish strong, supportive relationships with pupils. These have a positive effect on pupils' progress and well-being. Staff manage pupils' behaviour sensitively and consistently. They provide effective nurturing support, that helps pupils feel confident and comfortable. Teachers, ably supported by teaching assistants, show careful consideration for pupils by adapting their teaching and environment thoughtfully to meet individual pupils' well-being needs. For example, teachers provide a safe haven for pupils in Reception class to access the sensory rooms to support their well-being and develop self-regulation skills.

Teachers have begun to work collaboratively with schools in the cluster to enhance their understanding of the areas of learning and experience and develop an effective approach to curriculum planning. The school continues to develop its curriculum in line with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales and focuses learning on themes. Increasingly, learning experiences are relevant to the pupils' needs and interests and to real life contexts. For example, older pupils create influential presentations to highlight the effects that vaping has on people within their community. However, teachers do not always plan systematically to ensure that the learning experiences they provide engage all pupils purposefully.

Teachers develop pupils' speaking and listening, digital and reading skills in a progressive manner. For example, there is a structured programme to develop pupils' phonological knowledge, alongside opportunities for older pupils to gain a greater understanding of what they have read through a range of texts. However, teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to apply their writing and numeracy skills more widely in their learning. Generally, opportunities to include pupils in key decision making about what, and how they learn is at an early stage of development.

Most staff promote the Welsh language well. They are good role models for spoken Welsh and use a broad variety of instructions and everyday vocabulary naturally in lessons. Staff provide encouraging praise for pupils and provide a few opportunities to encourage the pupils to speak, ask and answer questions in Welsh outside of the classroom.

Many teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about their 'cynefin' and the wider world. A variety of experiences and extra-curricular activities enrich and enhance pupils' knowledge of Welsh heritage and diversity. Pupils value these opportunities and talk about them with enthusiasm. For example, local musicians help older pupils understand the links between foreign languages and words that we use in English through songs, while younger pupils visit animal farm parks to learn about habitats. The school draws upon the knowledge of pupils and staff with different languages and cultures to benefit pupils' understanding and appreciation of the wider world and its diverse nature. For example, Language Ambassadors teach their peers basic phrases in their native language.

Teachers use the forest school area well to support the physical development of and well-being of the younger pupils. However, there are not enough opportunities for older pupils to develop their skills in rich learning experiences in the outdoor area.

Most lessons have clear learning intentions and teachers make useful links to prior learning that supports pupil progress effectively. In a few instances, where teaching is most effective, teachers make engaging use of resources and relevant contexts that capture pupils' enthusiasm for learning. For example, they use a fictional crime scene within the school, to stimulate pupils' interest and spark curiosity. However, too often, pupils are over directed by staff, and spend too much time on low level activities, which limit the progress they make.

Teachers often use effective questioning techniques to check pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking. Skilled support staff work with pupils effectively, including those with ALN, to reach their individual goals. However, teachers' written feedback to pupils does not always highlight strengths and areas of improvement

explicitly enough for pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. Older pupils are beginning to self-assess and reflect on their own learning. Teachers provide worthwhile information to parents about their child's progress through regular meetings and reports. In addition, teachers support pupils to maintain a valuable digital learning record, which is shared with families.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring, supportive and inclusive community where staff foster a friendly ethos that allows pupils' well-being to thrive. Staff address pupils' social and emotional needs effectively and this helps pupils regulate their emotions and promotes positive behaviour throughout the school. Well-being is a priority for everyone and this shared ethos permeates the school. There is a strong sense of belonging where pupils feel safe, respected and valued.

There are highly effective arrangements to support the emotional, health and social needs of nearly all pupils, for example, by providing safe spaces for pupils to regulate their emotions and giving them responsibility for looking after the fruit and vegetables grown around the school. Pupils are proud of their contribution, and this contributes significantly to their happiness and social skills.

There is a whole school approach to ensuring that the needs of all pupils with ALN are met effectively. The ALN coordinator is particularly effective in managing and organising provision for pupils receiving additional support. She has established clear structures and rigorous procedures to identify, provide for and monitor the progress of pupils needing extra support and those with ALN.

Staff employ a wide range of purposeful strategies to support pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress from their starting points. Support staff are particularly effective in ensuring that pupils within their care receive the support they need.

The school provides a broad range of opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of their rights as a child. The wide range of leadership groups enable pupils to make important decisions about the school. For example, the School Council and Eco Committee play an important role in expressing their views on the new school and share ideas about how to make it function in accordance with principles of sustainability.

Staff promote and develop pupils' understanding of their identity, heritage and culture purposefully, for example through activities such as the school eisteddfod. Older pupils study the reasons why Welsh immigrants settled in Patagonia and how and why Welsh language and culture are promoted there. Teachers make effective use of landmarks such as Caerphilly Castle to develop pupils' appreciation of their locality. They plan a good range of school trips and visitors to the school to enrich the curriculum. These activities engage pupils purposefully, for example, younger pupils enthusiastically plan which areas of the zoo they want to visit to see their favourite animals.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own values and the values and beliefs of others, for example by learning about different faiths

from around the world. This further supports pupils understanding of diversity and encourages tolerance and inclusion.

Staff promote the importance of healthy eating and encourage physical fitness through a range of p activities. Pupils learn to play a range of musical instruments which gives them meaningful opportunities to broaden their skills and experiences.

Leaders and staff employ a wide range of effective strategies to promote pupils' attendance including celebration assemblies and regularly engaging with families to communicate the benefits of good attendance and punctuality. There are robust procedures in place for monitoring attendance and punctuality and as a result, overall school attendance rates are beginning to show slight improvement.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive appropriate training and support from the designated safeguarding leads. They work well with outside agencies and ensure that responses to their concerns are provided in a timely manner.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and staff work conscientiously to meet the needs of the pupils and to help them overcome any barriers to learning that result from challenging socio-economic circumstances. The headteacher has worked effectively with staff to create a strong team ethos and establish sound principles based on trust and support for all. This ensures an inclusive, supportive learning environment where all pupils and staff can succeed and feel valued.

Over time, the headteacher and leaders have established clear systems and processes that have brought about important progress in key areas such as communication with parents and improving pupil behaviour. These improvements have been sustained and have a worthwhile impact on pupils' learning and well-being overall. Leaders have also established a strong safeguarding culture which is well understood by all staff and governors. This contributes positively to a strong team ethic and mutual respect between pupils and adults working at the school.

Staff form a dedicated, hardworking team who collaborate well to ensure that pupil well-being is at the heart of their work. They create a happy, caring, and close-knit school where pupils work and play together confidently and develop the confidence and skills to engage positively with learning experiences.

Leaders have established a positive culture of professional learning. They ensure that there are suitable arrangements for managing the performance of staff and that performance targets link purposefully to the school's improvement priorities such as ALN reform, whilst also addressing individual staff development needs.

Leaders involve all staff in self-evaluation and setting the school's priorities for improvement. They gather a range of evidence and ensure that there are suitable processes to monitor and evaluate the work of the school and support improvement planning. However, leaders have not identified a few important shortcomings in provision that impact negatively on pupil progress. For example, monitoring activities

have not identified that at times, staff over-direct pupils' learning, and this limits the development of their independent learning skills.

Leaders give worthwhile focus to national priorities such as the development of pupils' Welsh language skills and the requirements of ALN reform. Leaders and staff have managed improvements in both of these areas that impact positively on pupil outcomes.

Governors have an appropriate understanding of the school's current priorities. The governing body ensure there is a strong culture of safeguarding and suitable arrangements for promoting pupils' healthy eating and drinking. Leaders, including governors manage finances carefully and expenditure links closely to school improvement priorities and provide appropriate support for pupils' social and emotional skills. Classrooms are well resourced, and leaders use grants, such as the pupil development grant to provide effective support for pupils.

The school builds successful partnerships with parents and the wider community. Parents appreciate the commitment leaders and staff demonstrate in supporting their child's learning and well-being.

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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