



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

A report on

**Nant Y Parc Primary School
Universal Site
Senghenydd
Caerphilly
CF83 4GY**

Date of inspection: December 2019

by

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

About Nant Y Parc Primary School

Nant y Parc Primary School is in Senghenydd in the Caerphilly local authority.

There are 225 pupils on roll, including 28 part-time nursery pupils. There are six single-age and two mixed-age classes, including the nursery.

The three-year rolling average of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is around 33%. This is considerably above the Wales average of 18%. The school states that around 19% of pupils have additional learning needs. This is just below the Wales average of 21%. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity and a very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school is currently working with the Welsh Government and other schools to take forward developments relating to education reform in Wales.

The headteacher was appointed in September 2014. Estyn last inspected the school in May 2015.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

Throughout their time at the school, nearly all pupils make very strong progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Nearly all pupils are conscientious and confident learners with strong independent working skills. They talk proudly about their school and describe it as a very caring and welcoming community. They enjoy school activities and nearly all conduct themselves well during lessons and at playtimes.

Across the school, most teachers plan highly imaginative and stimulating lessons that spark pupils' interest and engage them extremely well in their learning. Strong working relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and constructive. The school has provision of high quality to support pupils' emotional health and wellbeing.

The headteacher provides innovative, strong and caring leadership with effective support from the deputy headteacher and the senior leadership team. They have a clear vision for the school, which focuses strongly on pupil and staff wellbeing and creating a highly effective learning organisation. Governors know the school very well and play a key role in setting a positive strategic direction for the school.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Excellent
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Excellent
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Excellent

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils ability to draft and re-draft their written work
- R2 Share the examples of highly effective teaching more effectively across all classes

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study for dissemination on Estyn's website based on how the school has used research projects to enhance teachers' knowledge, which has led to improved learning opportunities for pupils and better pupil outcomes.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

Throughout their time at the school, nearly all pupils make very strong progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They apply these skills confidently and successfully in a wide range of creative and integrated activities. Pupils with additional learning needs make good and sometimes very good progress from their various starting points in intervention groups. Nearly all pupils develop as conscientious and confident learners with strong independent working skills.

Across the school, nearly all pupils listen to adults and to one another exceptionally well. They work very well together and respect each other's views. From a very young age, many pupils make very good progress in developing their speaking skills from a very low starting point. By Year 2, many provide convincing explanations when constructing an argument, for example when they consider whether it was the naughty Elf who left the mess overnight or someone else. Pupils continue to build on their strong communication skills and, by the end of key stage 2, most pupils are extremely articulate and confident speakers, for example when discussing their likes and dislikes on the school's radio station.

In the foundation phase, most pupils develop their reading skills well. They read with good intonation and expression. During group reading sessions, nearly all pupils discuss the story and express their opinions clearly, and a minority successfully predict what may happen next in the story. Reading is a pleasurable activity for many pupils and they read to teachers and teaching assistants regularly. In key stage 2, most pupils read confidently, and understand the context and features of different genres clearly within their reading experiences. Most pupils, including the less able, are enthusiastic readers and use a wide range of well-developed strategies to read unfamiliar words. By Year 6, nearly all pupils have sophisticated reading skills, for example scanning and skimming over reports produced after a mining disaster in order to write short recounts.

Across the school, nearly all pupils write successfully for a range of purposes in literacy lessons and in other areas of learning. Younger pupils make very good progress in developing their early writing skills. By Year 2, nearly all pupils write effective pieces of extended writing and pay suitable attention to punctuation and accurate spelling. In key stage 2, many pupils develop into confident writers using a wide range of genres when writing across the curriculum. For example, on World Environment Day, they write compelling diary extracts from the perspective of a sea turtle sending strong messages to mankind. There is evidence of pupils using their editing and redrafting skills well to improve their work. However, this practice is not consistent across all classes. In Year 6, many pupils become mature and creative writers, for example using emotive language to enhance their poetry writing effectively.

In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils make very good progress in developing their numeracy skills and they apply these skills confidently in an excellent range of engaging activities. For example, in Reception / Year 1, pupils use different

combinations of money to pay for toys up to 20p and count forwards and backwards in 10s with confidence. They use the mini kitchen independently and measure and weigh ingredients carefully using pictorial recipe cards and non-standard units of measure to make their gingerbread biscuits. Pupils collect information on their favourite sports and present their results accurately in tally charts and tables.

Most pupils in key stage 2 have well-developed numeracy skills. They apply these confidently when solving problems in mathematics lessons, using agreed problem-solving strategies. For example, most Year 4 pupils are able to double three-digit and four-digit numbers using a variety of approaches, including mental strategies, formal addition and partitioning. In Year 6, pupils interpret and interrogate the heart rates of Welsh rugby players during World Cup matches and produce accurately-drawn line graphs to show how these fluctuate during a game. Using this information, pupils discuss and make informative decisions as to when to replace tiring players.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils develop highly effective ICT skills. In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils use a wide range of computer programs and applications on tablet computers well. They develop a secure knowledge of how to program floor robots and use computer language, such as algorithms and debugging, accurately. They use robotic floor spheres confidently to support letter formation. During their recent work on the local area, older pupils make effective use of green screen technology to take photographs of themselves dressed as miners in the entrance of the old Universal colliery of Senghenydd. Key stage 2 pupils develop these skills further across different platforms available in school, such as tablet, portable and fixed computers. By Year 6, most pupils have developed excellent ICT skills. They make very effective use of the IT equipment in the radio studio to broadcast to fellow pupils during break and lunchtimes. Nearly all pupils have a secure knowledge of how to stay safe on line through real-life scenarios. For example, the ICT co-ordinator sent Year 6 pupils a spam e mail, using the school's secure website, informing them they had won a £100 voucher from a local chain store. Their full details were required in order to secure this windfall. As a result, this evoked an in-depth and mature discussion among pupils about why they should not share personal details with anyone online.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make steady progress in developing basic communication skills in Welsh. They respond appropriately to a range of instructions and they ask and answer simple questions confidently. For example, during their 'helpwr heddiw' session, Reception pupils are able to describe the weather accurately. By Year 2, they read familiar books with suitable pronunciation. In key stage 2, most pupils' writing skills develop appropriately when they use a set framework, for example when writing a play script on their likes and dislikes of particular music genres. Most pupils read familiar texts fluently. Their pronunciation is improving with reasonable attempts made when tackling unfamiliar words. Pupils' oracy skills are developing appropriately.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

The quality of pupils' wellbeing is a notable strength of the school. Pupils talk proudly about their school and describe it as a very caring and welcoming community. They enjoy school activities and nearly all conduct themselves well in lessons and at

playtimes. Working relationships between pupils and staff are nurturing and trusting and this contributes greatly to the provision of a very effective learning environment for pupils and staff.

A particularly strong feature is the collaborative way that all pupils across the school plan jointly with the teachers and identify what they would like to learn about various topics. This provides valuable opportunities for them to influence what they learn. It engages their interest and curiosity well and strengthens their commitment to their work

Most pupils work exceptionally well with others, collaborating effectively from a young age. They work productively as classes, individually and within smaller groups, sharing their achievements enthusiastically with each other. For example, in the Reception/Year 1 class, pupils work in small teams to collect and organise materials to construct a bridge for the gingerbread man to cross the river without getting wet. Nearly all pupils show pride in their work and display high levels of collaboration.

Pupils speak confidently about making the right food choices and about the benefits of exercise. They share these messages with their parents to encourage them also to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The introduction of a fully-equipped kitchen, set at children's height, has had a very positive impact on children's ability to cook independently with limited adult input. All pupils partake in the 'daily kilometre' initiative around the school yard. Most pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities that are available and many attend them regularly. For example, they enjoy the multi-sports, hockey, dance, computer and choir clubs. Nearly all pupils feel safe and valued in school. They are courteous and understand the expectations placed upon them in terms of their behaviour. Pupils treat one another, staff and visitors with very high levels of respect and tolerance.

Pupil voice is a strength of the school and has an impact on many aspects of the school's work. Most pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities within classes and during break times. They apply regularly for key leadership roles, which they enjoy and take very seriously. These develop pupils successfully as ethical, informed and active citizens. The pupils show strong leadership skills in the school's 'mini Senedd'. The leadership groups include criw Cymraeg, eco committee, digital team and curriculum team, and they work conscientiously to improve the school. For example, the recent re-introduction of a school library as a result of pupil input to school decision-making has had a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of books and reading. The work of the eco committee in reducing the school's carbon footprint is very successful.

The school has a high profile in its community and pupils have many opportunities to play an active role, for example by visiting or receiving visitors from a local care home to share one another's skills. Pupils support a range of charities, such as cleft awareness, children in need and NSPCC. All pupils have a strong understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They understand that not all children are as fortunate as they are and that this is a cause for concern and action.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. They are punctual at the start of the school day. Through innovative strategies, attendance

has improved steadily over the last few years. The school's attendance compares well with that of other similar schools.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Across the school, most teachers plan highly imaginative and stimulating lessons that spark pupils' interest and engage them extremely well in their learning. For example, a video clip of the gingerbread boy and friends making a mess in the Reception / Year 1 classroom instantly captures pupils' imagination, and provides excellent opportunities for extending pupils' thinking and their creative and speaking skills. Teachers in Year 4 inspire high levels of involvement in design and technology work by starting their lesson with a video of an earthquake disaster in Japan. As a result, teachers encourage pupils to design and make houses that are earthquake proof, which pupils test later to see if they can withstand vigorous shaking. Teachers are successful in linking pupils' work with real-life situations in this way and this gives the learning of key stage 2 pupils a very strong sense of purpose. Nearly all teachers set a brisk pace to their lessons that maintains pupils' interest and supports their progress very successfully.

Working relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and highly constructive. Teachers create a purposeful learning environment in which pupils feel confident to ask questions and to share ideas. All staff have high expectations and nearly all pupils respond well to the challenges that they set. Teachers and support staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. They provide effective support for pupils who need extra help with their learning.

Staff give pupils consistent, highly effective and well-planned opportunities to discuss their work and to express their opinions in pairs and in small groups. This helps pupils, including those with additional needs, to achieve at a high level and to make rapid progress in their learning. A particular strength of the school is the quality of staff questioning to develop and extend pupils' thinking skills. For example, they encourage younger pupils to speak about what they feel may happen next in a story and ensure that all children have an opportunity to answer. All staff are good language role models in both English and Welsh.

The school provides extensive opportunities for pupils to influence the content and context of their learning. For example, pupils share their ideas for their 'Cymru a'r Byd' topic and identify places of interest they wish to visit, such as Caerphilly castle. In the foundation phase, pupils are enthusiastic learners and are keen to share their ideas with teachers. As a result, these ideas develop effectively into stimulating, independent activities of high quality. In key stage 2, pupils contribute imaginatively to their own learning by reflecting on and evaluating their own performance regularly and suggesting ways for improvement. For example, after a science experiment on evaporation, a Year 5 pupil left a comment on the 'pupil voice' board asking if salt water would evaporate at the same rate as plain water. As a result, in the next lesson, the teacher constructed investigations to prove or disprove theories about the evaporation of water and salt water. Teachers develop pupils' ideas effectively and encourage them to engage in a variety of enriched tasks. As a result, nearly all pupils participate enthusiastically in activities and develop their skills systematically.

The school offers an innovative approach to curriculum planning. Following evaluation of previous topics, staff discovered that pupils found it difficult to relate to certain areas of learning. As a result, staff produced a broad and balanced curriculum based on the local area of Senghenydd. This is highly effective in stimulating and challenging the full range of pupils. Teachers plan carefully to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills progressively. Teachers weave opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in engaging contexts into their topic work. For example, the literacy and ICT work produced by key stage 2 pupils on the Senghenydd mining disaster is evocative, informative and sensitively portrayed.

Foundation phase experiences of high quality provide excellent opportunities for younger pupils to develop their own learning through well-constructed play-based activities. An excellent balance of teacher and pupil-led learning activities supports pupils' skill development very well. Staff work together to plan and resource the learning environments both inside and outside skilfully. They make sure that there is consistency and progression in the space, resources and experiences they provide, so that pupils develop their skills systematically from year to year. For example, there are wooden blocks of good quality in all classes, with plenty of space for pupils to experiment with them.

Staff use information from observations and assessments effectively to plan the next steps in pupils' learning successfully. Teachers help pupils to progress effectively in lessons by checking their understanding, and correcting misconceptions sensitively. Teaching assistants provide effective additional support. This is particularly valuable in the foundation phase where teaching assistants enable nearly all pupils to make the most of the extensive and very well-planned learning environments. For example, pupils use the 'Ty Crefft' extensively to pursue and enhance their construction skills.

The school promotes pupils' awareness of Welsh culture well. Teachers plan a wide range of worthwhile learning experiences. For example, the work done on the local community has significantly enhanced and developed pupils' knowledge of current and historical information. Pupils have the opportunity of taking part in the school Eisteddfod which coincides with St David's Day celebrations. Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest around Wales as part of their topic work. Visits to St Fagans Museum, Caerphilly Castle and Llanciach Fawr promote pupils' understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales appropriately. Virtual reality visits to places of interest, such as the Big Pit Blaenavon, have further enhanced pupils' understanding of the history and importance of coal mining in Wales.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The wellbeing of pupils is central to the school's ethos, vision and values. Senior leaders and staff have succeeded in creating a highly caring and nurturing learning environment that promotes mutual respect between staff, pupils and all members of the school community. As a result, nearly all pupils are happy in school and make strong progress in developing as independent, ethical and informed citizens.

All staff enable pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding extremely well. Through effective collective worship and various class

activities, the school provides pupils with very purposeful opportunities to develop their understanding of a range of social and moral issues. All staff place a strong emphasis on the rights of the child and they enable the 'Mini Senedd' pupil voice group to promote these successfully through effective daily routines. As a result, many pupils are active enquiring citizens who are able to discuss sensitive topics with maturity and confidence. The school has very effective international links, which enhance pupils' aspirations and their understanding of other countries' traditions and cultures significantly.

The school places considerable importance on supporting pupils' emotional health and wellbeing. It provides a range of very effective social and emotional programmes to help vulnerable pupils to express their feelings creatively and to find ways to deal with anger or frustration in an appropriate manner. The school's consistent approach to checking in on pupils' wellbeing on a daily basis using the wellbeing display boards is highly effective in supporting pupils to settle into lessons quickly.

The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to engage in cultural and creative activities. For example, the school choir sang with a national voice group in Cardiff and benefitted from the unique experience of a full orchestral accompaniment. All pupils understand the historical significance of their school's position on the site of the former Universal colliery in Senghenydd and many can recount important details of the mining disaster. Staff celebrate the arts successfully by providing pupils with a wide range of engaging activities. Pupils' art work is of a very high standard and the school displays it proudly around the site. The school successfully raises pupil aspirations through valuable partnerships with Cardiff University and Oxford University. These have enabled pupils to carry out worthwhile visits and to explore the concept of pupil voice in an unfamiliar setting.

Tracking and monitoring processes are robust in all areas of learning. Electronic monitoring systems and value-added trackers ensure that staff can monitor all pupils effectively and efficiently using a range of information, including on their wellbeing and attendance. This helps all pupils to make at least good and sometimes very good progress.

Well-trained staff deliver a range of intervention programmes of good quality to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, such as reading and mathematics catch-up programmes, together with speech and language activities for younger pupils. Staff record clear entry and exit data for each intervention and this allows leaders to review progress during planned review meetings rigorously.

The school has successfully developed strong partnerships with a wide range of agencies, which support vulnerable pupils very well. Relationships with parents are very strong and families are key partners in their child's learning journey. The school invites parents in for regular well-attended skills sessions with their children. The deputy headteacher meets with a parent panel to discuss relevant issues and this allows them to have a powerful voice in the running of the school. They have supported the school to improve attendance over the last few years and have improved the format of the end-of-school pupil reports. Links with the wider community are very strong and, as a result, many pupils have a strong sense of community, showing compassion, generosity and respect to others. A very

successful programme of 'Dementia Friends' has raised awareness across the school and led to Year 4 pupils working very successfully with a local care home.

Communication with parents is a very strong feature. The school radio and an effective website is very successful in updating parents and providing immediate access to daily school events and messages.

The school promotes healthy eating and drinking well. Teachers ensure that all pupils understand the importance of living a fit and healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe including online. For example, pupils sell fruit in the tuckshop at break times and take part in sporting activities after school as well as the 'daily kilometre' initiative.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher provides innovative, strong and caring leadership. She receives effective support from the deputy headteacher and senior leadership team. They share a clear vision for the school, which focuses strongly on pupil and staff wellbeing and creating a highly effective learning organisation for pupils and staff. They share their vision very successfully with all staff, pupils, parents and governors. As a result, staff work within a culture of strong professional and educational values. Teamwork is a strength of the school with all teachers and teaching assistants having designated leadership roles that they undertake well.

Staff work together well to support and improve the wellbeing of pupils, to raise their aspirations and to help them to become capable, confident and resilient learners. The partnership and trust between school, home and the local community is a substantial strength. For example, the extensive and purposeful work that the school has done to engage parents, for example through projects such as the parent panel, has led to redesigning the school's report to parents and improvements in pupils' attendance.

Senior leaders recognise the leadership qualities of staff at all levels and ensure that they have access to professional development opportunities of good quality. All staff, including non-teaching staff, take full advantage of the opportunities available to enhance their educational and professional knowledge significantly.

There is a strong culture of continuous improvement and self-reflection throughout the school. The many innovative research projects undertaken by staff have had a positive impact on pupils' standards. For example, pupils' behaviour, emotional needs and learning outcomes have improved following the introduction of daily wellbeing check in boards. This has allowed pupils to reflect on their emotions and for their teachers to understand the way they may be feeling. As a result, pupils are able to communicate with their teachers and receive the correct support they need to deal with their feelings. Pupils have become more active citizens and make many worthwhile contributions to the local community. For example, foundation phase pupils visited the local community chip shop in order to develop and enhance their own role-play area.

The school is an outstanding learning environment where staff reach out to other schools to learn from strong examples of highly effective practice elsewhere, for example visiting a school in Scotland to improve the quality of teachers' curriculum development and also visiting a school in London to improve the provision for pupils' oracy skills. The school shares this pioneering work to improve on their own practice very well and encourages its leaders at all levels to develop and support other local schools in south-east Wales. These innovative research projects have successfully raised the confidence and self-esteem of staff and provided worthwhile learning opportunities for pupils.

Self-evaluation arrangements are rigorous and focus clearly on standards and the effect of provision on improving pupils' outcomes. This allows leaders at all levels to bring about improvements quickly and successfully. First-hand evidence from a wide range of sources contributes effectively to the self-evaluation process and focuses well on extending pupils' standards. As a result, all staff have an in-depth knowledge of the school and succeed in ensuring continuous and sustainable improvements. Highly-skilled teaching assistants provide worthwhile support and have a significant effect on the development and attainment of specific groups of pupils.

The headteacher and all staff engage purposefully with educational changes. They address national and local priorities very successfully. For example, teachers have adapted provision to establish the new curriculum for Wales by creating a stimulating, creative and practical curriculum that engages nearly all pupils' interest and ignites their imagination well. Staff have agreed teaching strategies in all classes that ensure that pupils play an active part in their learning. As a result, pupils are keen to complete tasks to a high level and take pride in the ownership of their work. The school's response to the digital competence framework and to the development of literacy across the school has helped to secure high standards among pupils.

Governors know the school well and play a key role in ensuring an effective strategic direction for the school. Their strategic input into self-evaluation procedures is highly effective. Learning walks and regular visits to school by governors have enhanced their knowledge of the school, based on first-hand knowledge. The headteacher and senior leaders provide regular, detailed reports and presentations to governors, outlining the work of the school. As a result, the governing body has a thorough understanding of the school's performance, enabling it to act as an effective critical friend.

The headteacher and governing body manage the school's budget rigorously and purchase resources effectively to enrich the curriculum and to raise pupils' standards. Senior leaders are very successful in securing external grants to support school priorities. For example, the introduction of a fully-equipped radio station has had a positive impact on pupils' oracy skills and self-confidence. The school uses its Pupil Development Grant well to raise the standards of vulnerable pupils' wellbeing. The wide range of intervention strategies has had a positive impact on the self-esteem and outcomes of targeted pupils, for example through their visits to foreign countries to widen their horizons and to enrich the range of their social and cultural experiences.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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' wellbeing, 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)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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