



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

A report on

**Penllwyn Primary School
Fleur-De-Lys Avenue
Pontllanfraith
Blackwood
NP12 2NT**

Date of inspection: January 2018

by

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

About Penllwyn Primary School

Penllwyn Primary School is in Pontllanfraith, near Blackwood. There are 142 pupils between three to eleven years of age on roll, including 30 nursery children who attend on a part-time basis. There are five classes, including a morning nursery class. The numbers on roll are more than when the school was inspected in October 2010.

About 51% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. The school identifies around 39% of pupils as having additional learning needs. The home language of all pupils is English.

The current headteacher took up her role in September 2017.

The school is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to take forward developments relating to the curriculum.

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

The headteacher, staff and governors work together effectively. They are committed to tackling disadvantage and to reducing barriers to pupils' learning. Most pupils make good progress in their learning as they move through the school. The provision and teaching are good. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to provide pupils with interesting activities through which to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Effective monitoring and tracking help staff to ensure that they intervene quickly and appropriately if a pupil is underachieving. Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Most pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. They are well behaved and polite towards peers and adults. The school engages effectively with parents through regular events and social media. Across the school there are good opportunities for pupils to use the literacy and numerical skills that they learn in English and mathematics in other subjects, such as science and topic. Pupils use the opportunities in different subject areas well to improve their ICT skills and many pupils develop good skills in programming.

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

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' spelling of high frequency words and the handwriting skills of pupils in the foundation phase and key stage 2

R2 Improve pupils' independent working skills

R3 Improve the opportunities for staff to observe effective practice in other schools

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 about its work in relation to its detailed monitoring and tracking of pupils which ensure pupils' progress.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age. Most pupils make good progress as they move through the school.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in reading. Most pupils develop a good grasp of key sounds and they read single words and short sentences well. They use a few well developed skills to help them make sense of short sentences. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils can read a range of genres including children's fiction. They have a growing awareness of different authors and the styles in which they write. Most pupils express well thought-out opinions about the texts they read. They have a good understanding of the differences between factual and fictional texts. However, across both key stages, a minority of pupils do not make full use of phonic strategies to help them recognise a word before asking a member of staff for help.

Across the school, nearly all pupils present their written work well. In the foundation phase, most pupils develop writing skills effectively in an appropriate range of genres. By the end of the phase, many pupils use simple punctuation, such as capital letters and full stops, accurately. They write effectively for a range of different purposes, for example to read and write acrostic poems or to write instructions about how to grow a bean stalk.

In key stage 2, many pupils write confidently for a range of purposes. Pupils develop a good knowledge of aspects of grammar to help them write more effectively when composing an original story or writing their own motivational quotations. The writing of more able children is often well structured and many pupils make effective use of advanced punctuation to enliven their work, for example through including speech. However, across both key stages, pupils' handwriting skills are not developed well enough. Additionally, many pupils make too many mistakes with the spelling of high frequency words.

Across the school, most pupils respond well to instructions and questions from the staff and they express their ideas clearly. Nearly all pupils listen well to adults and each other. A few pupils across the school have very well developed oral skills and they speak confidently about their learning experiences.

Nearly all pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills well across the curriculum to solve interesting problems, for example to research whether they have enough money to buy a dog from a set budget or to plan and create a scaled mobile of the solar system.

Most pupils develop good mathematical knowledge and skills during their time in primary school. Most pupils in the foundation phase have a good awareness of numbers up to 30 and they understand which numbers are odd and which are even. In key stage 2, many pupils estimate using different measures, such as different size jugs, and can relate percentages to fractions. Most pupils think through more complex numerical puzzles carefully and explain their answers appropriately in writing.

As pupils move through the school, most pupils develop good skills in using word-processing software to draft their work. Most pupils use tablet computers effectively to support their learning, for example to research a topic on the internet. Most pupils in key stage 2 can import graphics to illustrate their written work and to make posters. Many pupils develop useful skills in programming. They create algorithms and devise their own formula with which to make calculations when using a spreadsheet in history, for example when using a formula to investigate the number of survivors, the numbers lost, the numbers on board and the percentage rescued from the Titanic.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. In the foundation phase, most pupils can understand and use common greetings and answer familiar questions. By Year 2, many pupils use familiar phrases confidently and respond well to basic instructions and questions from staff and other pupils. Across the school many pupils read and understand simple Welsh stories. Most younger pupils write simple sentences in Welsh correctly, while most older pupils write more complex and interesting sentences and paragraphs. However, many pupils are not fully aware of the Welsh heritage and culture that surround them.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic about their school and learning. Their behaviour in classes and around the school is good. Most pupils concentrate well in class and tackle new work purposefully. Nearly all share their thoughts and ideas readily. They are considerate when listening to the views of others. Nearly all pupils settle to their work well and enjoy solving problems and challenges. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe online. In both key stages, a few pupils make choices about what they learn and do. However, the extent to which pupils employ independent working skills is limited.

Nearly all pupils understand the school's values of 'achieve, care and enrich'. They show care and kindness towards each other. They are polite and welcoming to adults and visitors.

Pupils are developing a clear voice within the school through a range of clubs, committees and responsibilities. Pupils take on roles on the school council and they keep accurate records of their meetings and activities. They take their responsibilities seriously and, as a result of their actions, there has been a change to organisation at school lunch time. The school council has introduced a suggestion box with a form that not only asks pupils for their suggestions, but also asks pupils to predict what the benefits to the school of their suggestion might be. Digital leader roles provide good opportunities for many pupils to take on responsibilities for information and communication activities.

Most pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily. Many pupils enjoy the sports clubs the school offers. They also enjoy a good range of other clubs, such as dance, drama, art and cookery, which allows them to socialise and develop new skills outside of school hours. In the 'Vloggers' club, Year 6 pupils choose a theme to investigate and then capture and share images on video.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching is good across the school. Teachers plan well focused lessons with a range of interesting activities that are well matched to pupils' abilities overall to develop pupils' learning. They help pupils to build and to test out their knowledge systematically through good questioning. They use a good range of resources, including a wide range of ICT resources, to interest and challenge pupils. Teachers are beginning to listen to pupils' ideas about what they want to learn and they incorporate their ideas into their planning. However, this is at an early stage. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to support the learning of less able pupils and to challenge more able pupils. However, core activities are not always challenging enough for a few more able pupils.

Teachers use a thematic approach to learning that engages most pupils well by making learning relevant and interesting for them. Most teachers provide pupils with a wide range of experiences that enhance their learning successfully. Opportunities for pupils to make regular visits to local places of interest, such as Newport Wetlands and Cyfarthfa Park, support the school's curriculum well and enrich pupils' learning experiences greatly.

Most teachers plan successfully for the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. They provide pupils with useful opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects well. For example, pupils in Year 4 write in detail about the mummification process in Egyptian times.

The school is a Welsh Government pioneer school, helping to shape the new curriculum. It is making good progress in developing its provision for numeracy. The school has skilfully integrated the digital competency framework into its provision. As a result, there is a broad range of opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills across all areas of the curriculum, for example using quick response codes to signpost their learning.

The school has implemented the foundation phase principles effectively. Teachers regularly plan interesting activities outside within the well-resourced school grounds and the local community. These opportunities enhance pupils' learning well. However, in a minority of foundation phase classes, learning activities are mainly organised and directed by adults. This limits pupils' opportunities to make choices about how and what they would like to learn and to develop their independent learning skills.

Most pupils have suitable learning opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills. Most teachers incorporate everyday Welsh in classrooms successfully, for example through Helpwr Heddiw sessions. Teachers plan a comprehensive programme of work that focuses on developing pupils' language patterns progressively. Nearly all pupils have suitable opportunities to learn about the history and culture of Wales, for example through a comparative study between their local area and Patagonia.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has effective arrangements to support pupils' wellbeing. It is a caring community that nurtures pupils' personal and social skills well. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' moral and spiritual wellbeing. There are strong working

relationships with parents and the school offers a comprehensive range of opportunities for them to be involved. For example, pupils take home weekly “Chilli Challenges”, problem-solving activities that pupils can either do by themselves or with their parents’ help. The ‘Pandas’ pre school activity club introduces parents to activities that they can do with pre-school children to prepare them for the school day and learning. This partnership has a positive effect on the pupils’ learning. The school’s extensive use of its own social media application provides further beneficial, and easily accessible, advice for parents on pupils’ learning and school matters.

There are very comprehensive systems for tracking the progress of all pupils. Teachers identify successfully pupils who are underperforming and they track the impact of a variety of interventions well to improve pupil attainment. Through its extensive identification system, the school provides many beneficial planned opportunities to improve all pupils’ learning outcomes. This is an excellent feature.

Most teachers assess pupils’ work accurately. However, in a minority of cases, teachers’ assessment of pupils’ writing skills is over generous.

Arrangements for identifying and responding to the needs of specific pupils are rigorous. The school measures carefully the effect of support and intervention programmes on the achievement of pupils with specific and complex needs very well. Staff work closely with a wide range of professional specialists, including speech therapists, to plan suitable programmes for identified pupils. Pupils with individual education plans have comprehensive targets that the school reviews, discusses with them and updates regularly.

The school delivers a successful wellbeing programme that helps many pupils to improve their confidence and to achieve success in their learning. A range of effective strategies have been put in place to raise awareness of the importance of good attendance, for example through weekly newsletters, social media, attendance displays and rewards.

The school makes appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Pupils understand the importance of being active. For example, all pupils participate in daily exercise activities. The school teaches pupils how to stay safe online well. Visits from the local police liaison officer develop pupils’ awareness of how to keep themselves safe in the community. The school’s arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school provides pupils with appropriate opportunities to be active in the local community. For example, pupils participate in local concerts as part of the school choir. Teachers are developing opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn, by including their ideas about a topic into their planning.

The school promotes pupils’ understanding of values such as honesty, tolerance and co-operation effectively. The curriculum, daily routines, and acts of collective worship contribute well in developing these aspects. Pupils have developed an understanding of Hindu culture through a recent whole school celebration on the festival of Diwali.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides effective leadership. Since her recent appointment, together with staff and governors, she has set a clear strategic direction for the school within a caring and supportive atmosphere, which has reducing the barriers to learning for pupils at its heart. She communicates high expectations and aspiration for all pupils and she shares this vision successfully with the school community.

The newly formed senior leadership team supports the headteacher well. All teaching and support staff contribute conscientiously to monitoring and evaluating the school's work. In nearly all cases, they identify the school's strengths and areas for development accurately, by using a wide range of evidence. As a result, they address national priorities successfully, such as improving pupils' literacy and numeracy, developing pupils' digital competence and reducing the attainment gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers.

There is a close link between the outcomes in the school's self-evaluation report and the priorities in the school development plan. Teachers, support staff and governors work within effective cross-curriculum teams to take forward priorities in the school development plan. They decide upon activities to address the strategic actions set out in the plan, negotiate responsibilities and agree milestones to review their progress. This distributed approach to leadership develops a shared responsibility for raising pupil standards and a strong culture of collaboration successfully. However, in a very few instances, objectives in the school development plan are too broad. This means that leaders and staff do not always focus sharply enough on the aspects that require most improvement, for example pupils' spelling and handwriting.

Governors have comprehensive knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have a thorough understanding of performance information and they contribute well to school improvement. They visit the school regularly to gather first-hand evidence by carrying out learning walks with pupils and curriculum leaders, and by scrutinising pupils' work. As a result, they monitor pupils' progress and achievements robustly and they challenge leaders appropriately.

The school is developing a beneficial culture of professional learning. Through its 'links for leading learning' programme, teachers observe each other regularly and this supports them to develop as reflective practitioners. Teachers have worked together to create high-quality portfolios to exemplify progression in pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. This has been particularly helpful in supporting new teachers to plan rich learning experiences that develop pupils' skills well. As a pioneer school, staff share successful approaches to teaching and learning in mathematics. However, in general, there are not enough opportunities for staff to observe effective practice in other schools.

The headteacher and governing body manage the school's budget carefully. Leaders work creatively to enhance provision by securing additional grants, for example to improve the quality of the outdoor learning environment. The purchase of tablet computers is having a beneficial impact on pupils' range of experiences and standards in ICT.

The school makes highly effective use of the pupil development grant. Leaders provide detailed guidance to help teaching assistants to plan successful literacy and numeracy interventions. They observe pupils' progress in these sessions and they provide beneficial feedback to teaching assistants; for example by discussing how to refine a teaching approach to best improve pupils' skills. At the end of the programme of support, teaching assistants provide well-focused reviews, identifying how much progress individual pupils have made. This systematic approach enables leaders, teachers and governors to evaluate the effectiveness of particular strategies on improving outcomes for pupils and this helps to ensure the efficient use of resources. As a result, the school has been very successful in reducing the attainment gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils.

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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