



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

A report on

**Melin Primary School
Mile End Row
Melin
Neath
SA11 2ED**

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by

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

About Melin Primary School

Melin Primary School is in Melincryddan, near Neath. The school opened in September 2016 following the amalgamation of the former infant and junior schools. It is on two sites that are around a kilometre apart. There are approximately 250 pupils on roll, aged from three to eleven, including 43 nursery children who attend part time. There is a notable proportion of pupil transience. The school has four single-age and six mixed-age classes.

The school identifies around 24% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is higher than the national average (21%). A very few pupils have a statement of educational needs. The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is about 44%. This is much higher than the national average (19%). Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity and very few speak Welsh at home or speak English as a second language. A very few pupils were excluded in the past 12 months.

The headteacher took up his post in September 2016, following the amalgamation. This is the school's first inspection in its present form.

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

Melin Primary School is inclusive and caring and places pupils' wellbeing at the centre of its work. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership and promotes an appropriate teamwork approach among all staff. Although most pupils start school with relatively low skill levels, they respond well to quality provision and make at least suitable progress in acquiring skills in literacy and numeracy, which they apply effectively across the curriculum. Teaching is good and the curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of interesting learning opportunities. Nearly all pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards their learning. They are polite and respectful. The school manages its finances efficiently.

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 Raise the attainment of more able pupils

R2 Enable pupils to influence how and what they learn

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most pupils enter the school with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are below those expected of pupils of a similar age. Throughout the school, most pupils have commendable attitudes to their learning. Consequently, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress as they move through the school. However, more able pupils are not always challenged enough to reach their full potential.

In the foundation phase, most pupils listen well to questions and instructions during lessons. Despite the low levels of language skills that most have on entry, most pupils develop their speaking skills well and make their meaning clear. More able pupils talk confidently about their work. For example, in their topic on mini-beasts, they share ideas effectively to agree on the design of successful bug hotels. Many foundation phase pupils use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read and spell unfamiliar words successfully. Many older pupils are enthusiastic readers. They read fluently and with increasing expression. By the end of the foundation phase, many pupils write effectively in a variety of styles, such as when recounting their visit to a farm at Christmas. They use story maps well to support their retelling of traditional tales, such as the 'The Gingerbread Man'. They organise their writing into sentences and use simple punctuation accurately. Most apply their literacy skills appropriately across the curriculum.

In key stage 2, most pupils speak confidently and clearly. For example, they discuss the best ways to describe the feelings they wish to stir up in passengers when designing a roller coaster ride. Most older pupils use a wide range of vocabulary to express their opinions. They listen carefully and respect each other's views, for instance when discussing how to test fairly the effects of exercise on the heart. Most pupils are avid readers and talk eagerly about their favourite characters and books. They read fluently with suitable levels of expression. Older pupils in key stage 2 skim and scan non-fiction books competently to support their research for topic work. By Year 6, most pupils write well in a variety of genres and in their work across the curriculum. They choose words carefully to make their writing more interesting. For example, in their study of polar regions, they write that 'A penguin positioned towards the centre of a huddle has a smaller amount of heat loss than an isolated penguin.' Their spelling and punctuation are generally accurate.

Many pupils throughout the school make good progress in developing and applying their numeracy skills in mathematics lessons and in a range of activities across the curriculum. For example, in the foundation phase, pupils record changes in their age, weight and height over the year, and calculate the differences. Pupils in Year 2 tally the different types of buildings in the locality and discover that terraced houses are the most common. Most pupils continue to make good progress in key stage 2, using increasingly complex calculations effectively across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 4 compare the prices of different brands of sportswear to find the cheapest and best value buy. Older pupils calculate the percentages of Titanic survivors from each cabin class and compare these with losses to the crew.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their information and communication (ICT) skills. In the foundation phase, most use notebook and tablet computers confidently to combine images and text, for example when describing mini-beasts. They choose sensibly whether to write with the keyboard or the touch screen depending on the task. Most pupils in key stage 2 develop their ICT skills well, using a wide range of hardware and software appropriately. For instance, they prepare multimedia presentations on how to keep healthy as part of their 'Calon Lan' topic. They build and search databases and use basic coding skills confidently to move 'sprites' around a screen.

In the foundation phase, many pupils have a positive attitude to Welsh and can be overheard saying that they love Welsh. They respond appropriately to instructions given in Welsh, sing simple Welsh songs and begin to build a useful vocabulary. In key stage 2, many pupils read Welsh books with suitable pronunciation, although only a few respond confidently to questions about the text. Many older pupils write competently in Welsh. For example, they write articles about Gareth Bale and other Welsh celebrities. Although many pupils answer questions orally about themselves, their families and the weather, most give one- or two-word answers and lack the confidence to answer at length.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils feel happy and secure in school. They understand how to stay safe from physical and verbal abuse, including when they are online. Most pupils are polite and considerate, and show respect for one another and adults. They treat visitors courteously and with maturity. All pupils and adults have very positive working relationships that enhance their sense of wellbeing effectively. Nearly all pupils know whom to go to if they are upset or worried and they know that staff will listen to their concerns and act upon these appropriately. All this creates a positive environment in which nearly all pupils thrive.

Most pupils display good behaviour in lessons, while moving about the school and during playtimes. Older pupils operate a 'playground buddy' system enthusiastically and are ready to assist their classmates promptly. They share the outdoor areas and play equipment fairly. They behave respectfully during activities such as collective worship. As a result, most pupils have a strong understanding of fairness, equality and appreciate that the views of others are important. Most pupils develop key attitudes and behaviours that will help them to learn throughout their lives.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and taking regular exercise. However, a few pupils' lunchboxes include less healthy snacks. Many pupils improve their fitness by participating in a range of extra-curricular clubs, such as running and sports. Others enjoy the cultural activities on offer such as drama, art and Welsh.

Overall, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, undertake a wide range of responsibilities effectively. Many pupils contribute enthusiastically to the wider life of the school through different pupil groups such as the school council, eco-committee and digital leaders. For example, the school council canvassed pupils in each phase to find their preferred options for developing the outdoor environment. They identified equipment, costed out a plan and designed the layout. These

activities help them to develop a sense of pride and achievement, as well as an understanding of the value of looking after their surroundings. All foundation phase pupils use the outdoor areas to support their understanding of active learning well and promote their independence. For example, they hunt for picture clues to find numbered animals. Most pupils who have social and emotional needs benefit from their activities in the forest school area. All pupils who use this area learn to respect the environment that they are working in and know how to use necessary tools safely.

Most pupils enjoy their learning and participate in lessons enthusiastically. From an early age, they show positive attitudes towards their work. Many pupils across the school are beginning to show good levels of resilience when facing challenges in their tasks. For example, when younger pupils in key stage 2 construct a cube using a variety of materials, they realise that working co-operatively is likely to bring success sooner. Most pupils work well together, share and take turns. For example, older foundation phase pupils share ICT equipment to read quick response codes to access information on the life cycle of the butterfly.

Through participation in a range of appropriate intervention groups and activities, pupils whose basic skills require a boost make good progress in achieving an appropriate level for their age and ability. Rates of attendance are improving as pupils respond positively to a programme of incentives that the school council proposed.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The overall quality of teaching is good. In nearly all classes, staff build supportive working relationships with pupils and create a productive learning atmosphere. They place a high priority on promoting pupils' wellbeing. Most teachers use a good range of questioning strategies to check on pupils' understanding and to promote their thinking skills. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and intervene at appropriate times to provide support, particularly to the less able. This nurturing ethos enables nearly all pupils to make at least appropriate progress. Teachers deploy their assistants effectively and they work in purposeful partnership to enhance provision. Nearly all teachers plan lessons effectively and lessons proceed at an appropriately brisk pace. In the very few lessons where teaching is less effective, the slow pace of the lesson occasionally tempts a few pupils to engage in low-level disruption.

Nearly all teachers have high expectations of most pupils. They set clear learning objectives and use a range of approaches to stimulate learning. In key stage 2, most pupils respond well to the directed challenges and engage in tasks immediately. They show enthusiasm for their work. However, in a few classes, the challenge for more able pupils to work independently is less well developed. For example, in some subject areas, the overuse of scaffolding sheets inhibits pupils' ability to extend their written work. Overall, there are too few opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn.

Teachers provide effective written and oral feedback and most pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. For example, many

pupils have begun to use a system of self-assessment to evaluate their work and suggest ways to improve, but this is at an early stage of development.

Planning and provision for pupils to develop skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are effective. In the foundation phase, pupils have worthwhile opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills through a good range of well-planned activities. As they move through the school, most pupils learn to apply their skills well across the curriculum. For example in their study of polar regions, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 compare the weather in Wales and the Antarctic. Under the theme 'Sportswear Designer', pupils produce a fact file on football kits. The application of ICT skills across the curriculum is a strong feature. Nearly all pupils show a good level of confidence when accessing various programs and applications.

Teachers in the foundation phase have a secure understanding of how young pupils learn best. They maintain a stimulating learning environment. However, there is restricted access to the outdoors so that pupils' opportunities for experiential learning are restricted. Staff ensure that most pupils develop confidence and independence from a low starting point as they move through the phase. Across the school, nearly all teachers stretch pupils appropriately, providing challenging tasks in literacy and numeracy. Careful planning provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils respond well to the new thematic approach. Topics start with a memorable experience. For example, pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 visit an aquarium and reception pupils visit the local superstore as part of their topics. Pupils develop their cultural heritage and understanding of Wales well through a range of opportunities such as visits to areas of interest including Llangrannog, Caerleon and Margam Park. Opportunities for pupils to suggest their own ideas in the early planning stage of each topic are less well developed.

The school uses the local community and areas in Wales well to enhance opportunities for pupils. For example, good links with the local church and allotment organisation provide pupils with a sense of belonging.

The provision for the Welsh language and the promotion of bilingualism is a developing feature of the school. Nearly all staff use Welsh effectively in everyday routines and most pupils respond positively, showing an enthusiasm for the language. There are regular opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in formal lessons. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use Welsh informally during the day.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has an inclusive, supportive and caring ethos that permeates its daily life and work. It nurtures pupils' personal, social and spiritual development well. Its stated values of motivating, engaging, learning, inspiring and nurturing are highly visible in both phases. Older pupils explain how this philosophy affects their everyday social relationships in a positive manner. The school has robust, proactive procedures for promoting equality and dealing with the very few reports of bullying. As a result, it provides a safe environment for all its pupils that fosters high quality levels of kindness and respect. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and they have a secure moral compass. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

There are comprehensive systems for tracking, monitoring and recording the progress of all pupils accurately. This ensures a smooth transition from one class to the next. Consequently, staff know the circumstances and needs of individuals well, and provide worthwhile learning experiences for most pupils. This is especially pertinent for pupils with additional needs.

Provision for pupils who need additional support is good. Appropriately trained staff deliver good quality intervention programmes that meet the needs of nearly all pupils successfully to improve their literacy, numeracy and emotional skills. Consistent procedures ensure that all pupils make suitable progress. For example, individual progress plans map out the support that will enable these pupils to catch up with their peers. Parents are encouraged to play an active role in this process. They understand their child's targets and know how they can support them to achieve their individual goals. As a result, many pupils make good progress in line with their ability.

Valuable links with a variety of external agencies support the school and its pupils well. This is evident with nurture groups where liaison activities are particularly strong. For example, close liaison with the Flying Start settings allows early identification of need for the youngest children, giving them a solid base from which they can flourish.

A well-established range of groups enables most pupils to develop, and take effective responsibility for improvement and change within the school. They include pupils across both phases. As a result, all pupils are beginning to have a strong voice in a range of school issues. For example, a school council consultation developed a set of particularly motivational strategies for all pupils to improve their attendance. Nearly all pupils are keen to engage with this initiative, and receive recognition for good attendance through the well-planned and creative rewards system. As a result, rates of attendance are improving.

The school has effective arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking and promotes most pupils' understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Regular physical education sessions and a range of extra-curricular sports activities, such as a running club, support these well. In addition, the school holiday enrichment programme provides further worthwhile opportunities for pupils to access activities designed to support their health, emotional and physical needs.

Other clubs, including drama, Welsh and ICT, provide enjoyable creative and cultural experiences. Each year, pupils take the opportunity to show off their creative talents at the school Eisteddfod. The choir sings at a variety of community events, and older pupils take part in the town's annual maypole festival.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. He shares his clear vision for the future of the school with all members of the school community and has high expectations of pupils and staff. Together with senior members of staff and governors, he has overseen the successful amalgamation of two separate units into a school with a distinctive philosophy and sense of purpose. All members of staff

share positive, professional working relationships that support the school's caring ethos.

The headteacher has distributed roles and responsibilities appropriately among members of staff. All staff have clear job descriptions and understand how they contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Senior leaders monitor standards and take appropriate action to address shortcomings in the school's provision. The headteacher has a strong record of tackling staff underperformance robustly.

The school has a well-structured programme of self-evaluation activities that draw on first-hand evidence and involve a wide range of contributors, including staff, pupils and governors. The self-evaluation report gives an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The report informs the school improvement plan, which contains a manageable number of priorities. The plan has a logical structure and is a useful tool for bringing about improvements. Many of the plan's priorities match national priorities, including improving pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and Welsh. The school's response to the digital competence framework is developing well. Previous improvement plans have supported improved attainment, notably in the foundation phase, well.

Members of the governing body contribute a wide range of relevant skills and expertise to their roles. They are supportive and know the school well through their frequent visits. The headteacher's detailed reports keep governors well informed about the school's life and work. Governors challenge leaders appropriately in important areas, such as attendance and the quality of teaching and learning.

Arrangements to manage staff performance are comprehensive. All teachers and teaching assistants have relevant targets that link to the school improvement plan along with a range of appropriate professional learning opportunities. For example, staff have updated their skills in ICT and undertaken specialist training to support pupils with additional learning needs. All teachers share good practice with colleagues and, as a result, approaches to teaching and learning are consistent across the school.

The headteacher and governors monitor spending carefully to ensure that the school's budget is use efficiently. The school deploys its pupil development grant appropriately to support vulnerable learners by funding specialist interventions that improve pupils' attainment and wellbeing.

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.

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