



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

A report on

Brynmenyn Primary School

**Heol Sarah Jane Howell
Tondu
Bridgend
CF32 9SB**

Date of inspection: October 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Brynmenyn Primary School

Name of provider	Brynmenyn Primary School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	409
Pupils of statutory school age	292
Number in nursery classes	58
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 21.3%)	32.8%
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 22.2 %)	16.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	20/04/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	17/09/2012
Start date of inspection	17/10/2022

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

Brynmenyn Primary School is a happy, inclusive school that places a high priority on the well-being of its pupils. It provides a calm haven where pupils blossom. Behaviour of all pupils both in and around the school, is exemplary.

From a very young age pupils develop an understanding of the importance of respecting others. They interact well throughout the school day and are sensitive to each other's needs. From their often, low starting points, pupils make a significant progress in developing their speaking and listening skills and, as a result, most pupils have excellent oracy skills. By Year 6, pupils can hold in-depth conversations about their work and carefully consider each other's responses in group discussions. However, pupils' Welsh language skills are less strong. Pupils are developing a strong voice in the school and contribute well to a variety of groups and committees and can give examples of where their influence has had a positive impact on school life.

Teachers make effective use of the indoor environment and plan interesting activities for pupils to develop their wider skills in the 'street'. All staff have positive relationships with pupils and help them significantly to develop positive attitudes to learning, although opportunities for pupils to mature as independent learners are underdeveloped. The school is establishing a curriculum around the pupils' needs which helps them to develop a purposeful understanding of their local and wider community and their place in the world. Leaders and staff care well for all pupils. They have developed effective links with parents and carers which has contributed to the supportive community feel in the school.

The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has developed an effective senior leadership team, who support her well. The staff work closely as a team and are committed in creating life-long learners. Overall, they know their school well, but self-evaluation processes do not always focus sharply enough on what learners do and achieve.

Recommendations

- R1 Focus monitoring, evaluation and improvement strategies more sharply on improving provision and the standards of pupils' learning
- R2 Provide opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and become independent learners
- R3 Improve pupils' Welsh speaking skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils join the nursery with skills and understanding below those expected for their age. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those who are eFSM, make good progress from their starting points.

Very few of the younger pupils speak clearly and confidently when they start in the school. Within the year, many pupils in the reception class gain the confidence to talk and begin to contribute successfully during their carpet sessions. They enjoy playing different characters in the class post office and retell stories well. This rapid progress continues, and by Year 2, pupils pay close attention to what others say, and talk enthusiastically about their work. As the pupils continue to develop and mature so do their oracy skills. As a result, most pupils in Year 6 are extremely articulate speakers. Overall, pupils' oracy skills across the school are excellent.

In many classes, pupils respond appropriately to questions asked in Welsh by their teachers or by the daily Helpwr Heddiw. However, throughout the school pupils do not speak Welsh confidently enough and do not have a sufficient understanding of basic language patterns to respond well to common questions.

Most pupils develop effective reading skills. By Year 2, many pupils show a good understanding of what they have read and make sensible predictions about what might happen next in a story. From Year 3 to Year 6 many pupils find pleasure in reading. They use research skills effectively to scan text for information, for example when they discover facts about bats and the causes and consequences of why our environment is changing.

As pupils move from the nursery class to Year 2, they develop means of communicating their ideas on paper well. They progress from mark making to letter formation and eventually forming basic words to produce interesting pieces of writing, for instance, using imaginative vocabulary to describe imaginary dragons. From Year 3 to Year 6 pupils write for a range of genres and purposes and produce interesting letters, for example, to question Liz Truss about the state of the economy. However, pupils, particularly the more able, do not always produce work to demonstrate the best of their ability and very few are extending their writing in other areas of learning. Pupils' ability to spell a range of words correctly is variable across the school.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing a range of skills in their maths lessons. Pupils across the school have a sound grasp of number work and use appropriate vocabulary when sharing their methods of calculation. The younger pupils in the nursery recognise numbers through a range of practical activities for example, matching numbers with leaves and acorns. As the pupils move through the years, they recall previous learning well and are able to build on prior learning effectively. Pupils use correct mathematical terms to explain their word problems and confidently share more than one method with their classmates and more able older pupils use formal calculation strategies accurately. Across the school, most pupils are beginning to use their mathematical skills in other areas of learning such as using their problem-solving skills in a design and create activity. Overall, opportunities to use measures, shape and space and data handling are appropriate.

Nearly all pupils confidently use digital programmes to support their learning. They research the history of previous leaders in parliament and creatively change famous photographs to design campaign posters. Younger pupils access a range of apps, such as spelling and maths games to help them learn. Throughout the school, they use word processing and presentation programmes well to record and share their work on topics. The older pupils in Year 6 are beginning to interrogate data bases and create and interrogate their own to select, for example, a particular type of house from an estate agent. However, pupils' skills in coding are limited. Across the school most pupils make purposeful progress in developing their physical and social skills through activities in the indoor and outdoor areas. Overall, most pupils' ability to apply their creativity, particularly in independent activities, is less well developed.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Every morning pupils enter school with positive attitudes and an enthusiasm for learning. Within the safe and nurturing environment, the pupils thrive and develop into mature and caring individuals. Across the school, most pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

Pupils are polite and well-mannered, and show respect for adults and to one another. They greet visitors with a warm smile and a friendly greeting, which makes you feel a part of the wider school community immediately. Pupils' interaction with each other and all adults is exemplary and they clearly feel at ease when sharing their personal well-being issues or discussing their work.

Nearly all pupils contribute to their own well-being and that of other pupils very effectively. They are very aware of each other's needs and take great care of each other. The 'knife and fork' buddies in Year 4 spend valuable time with the very young pupils during their first term in school to teach them table manners and to develop sound friendships. This has a very positive effect on pupils' happiness and feeling of safety as they become more confident and settle into school life.

The way that pupils behave and conduct themselves both inside and outside the classroom is a notable feature of the school. Pupils move calmly and sensibly from one task to another. They demonstrate high levels of self-motivation and engage well with nearly all tasks. Most pupils are very comfortable working collaboratively. They share out roles in group tasks and consider the strengths of individual members sensitively. They work on their joint tasks with gusto, particularly when they're discussing the qualities needed to be a leader. Most pupils are beginning to improve their own work and contribute to what they want to learn. However, many pupils' independent learning skills are limited as they rely too much on adults to direct them in their learning.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and they persevere very well with their tasks. Pupils are beginning to develop effective strategies to overcome difficulties in their work. They work diligently for extended periods of time when completing their activities and work effectively with their peers from a young age in the nursery class. They listen to, and respect, the views of others effectively when, for example, discussing how to develop an election campaign in Year 6.

Most pupils show exemplary maturity when taking on additional responsibilities, such as becoming members of the School Council, developing their role as a 'Red Cap' and contributing to the Eco Committee. The Junior Leadership team and School

Ambassadors show a strong commitment and enthusiasm towards improving and evaluating particular aspects of the school. They have successfully established an anti-bullying campaign and are beginning to promote positive attitudes to learning effectively.

All pupils benefit enormously from a variety of mindfulness sessions which contributes well to their general well-being. They have a secure understanding of the need to eat healthily and to partake in regular physical exercise during the day and through the school's extra-curricular clubs.

Many pupils have a purposeful understanding of their rights and responsibilities as global citizens. Through a number of fund-raising activities, the pupils are developing an empathy towards others by supporting local and world-wide charities. Pupils talk warmly about the close link they have with the local care home and are very proud of the joy and happiness they bring to the residents when they visit.

Teaching and learning experiences

A notable strength of the school is how the staff create a calm, nurturing and productive environment for pupils, which makes the school a delightful place to learn. Teachers know their pupils well. They form warm, respectful relationships with them and provide engaging and inclusive learning activities. Very effective processes to promote exemplary behaviour support pupils to be highly motivated and develop them as positive and confident learners.

Staff have developed their classes to be stimulating and enjoyable places for pupils to learn. The 'street' area outside each classroom extends the learning effectively with opportunities for the pupils to explore, design, engineer and construct. The extensive school grounds further enhance curriculum provision for games, physical education and the development of pupils' co-ordination skills. However, the staff use the outdoors as additional space rather than a resource to enhance and refine pupils' skills. The school supplements its curriculum well with a range of visits and visitors to school and engaging extra-curricular activities that enrich pupils' experiences, such as lunchtime clubs to develop pupils digital and creative skills.

At the beginning of lessons, teachers provide clear explanations to pupils to ensure that they are fully aware of what they need to do to succeed in their tasks. Most teachers use questioning carefully to support pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding and to extend their learning further. They provide pupils with valuable verbal feedback throughout lessons. Teachers' comments are sensitive and encouraging and they often pause to allow the pupils to celebrate their successes, taking the time to build their confidence effectively. The quality of teachers' written feedback is more variable. Where it is most effective, teachers provide pupils with clear guidance on how they can improve their work and pose relevant questions to help extend their thinking, rather than focussing exclusively on accuracy or grammar.

Teachers deploy the learning support officers well to support the learning and well-being of pupils in all activities. In most classes, teachers plan activities that are interesting and engaging, which successfully strengthen pupils' attitudes to learning. They use resources well to enhance their teaching and to capture pupils' imagination. In the best examples, teachers provide activities that meet the needs of pupils appropriately, building well on previous learning. They adapt activities thoughtfully, to provide an appropriate level of challenge that allows most pupils to make beneficial

progress. However, there is a tendency for teachers to lead too many of the activities, which limits opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and become independent learners.

Leaders have a clear vision for the school's curriculum. Staff work effectively together to improve teaching and learning through their reflective approach to curriculum reform. They have worked well to begin structuring the curriculum so that it builds systematically and coherently on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school. Teachers from the same year groups work well together to ensure that learning activities are coherent and purposeful. Staff and pupils create class themes that enable pupils to engage in critical thinking, problem solving and discussion about local and national issues. For example, Year 4 pupils research and explore various countries and learn about culture, religion, languages, and everyday lives of children around the world.

The provision for developing pupils' oracy skills in English is a particular strength. Through well considered activities, pupils' build confidence and resilience as they progress from class to class. Teachers often plan and design the curriculum to provide engaging opportunities that enable pupils to develop a range of literacy skills within their daily activities. For example, whilst studying 'rules and rulers', Year 6 pupils write a diary entry about their day as the Prime Minister during the cost-of-living crisis. However, opportunities to develop pupils' extended writing skills in other areas of learning and Welsh language skills is less successful. Overall, teachers' planning to develop pupils' numeracy and digital skills is appropriate.

Care, support and guidance

Staff place an extremely high priority on the well-being of pupils and this has been a particular focus both during and since the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff know their pupils very well and meet their well-being needs highly effectively. Programmes to develop and support social and emotional literacy are very well embedded and having considerable impact. Overall, this strong focus on pupil well-being is a strength of the school.

Throughout the school there is a calm, coherent and consistent approach to behaviour management. The staff have worked closely with the pupils to develop self-control strategies in order to control their own and their peers' emotions. Further initiatives such as anti-bullying week and playground buddies, help to ensure there are very few incidences of bullying. As a consequence, pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

The school has recently introduced new approaches to developing pupils' understanding of equality, diversity and building their aspirations for the future. Themed weeks, such as 'Unique me and diversity' or 'The world of work' offer pupils extensive opportunities to explore themselves and to celebrate what makes each of us different. The school hosted a large number of organisations to explore a broad range of future careers including vets, tradesmen, and a prosthetic engineer who ran workshops for each year group to re build limbs and joints. As a result, the pupils developed an understanding of basic engineering skills and an empathy for those with a physical impairment.

The school promotes cultural, spiritual and moral development through the curriculum and daily acts of worship. The staff have established a strong sense of

belonging through promoting the values of honesty, truth, kindness, support and respect. These values are understood well by both pupils and parents. Regular assemblies and opportunities for older and younger pupils to work or play collaboratively further strengthen relationships and build trust between all members of the school.

The school holds an annual Eisteddfod to raise pupils' awareness of the tradition and interest in the traditions and culture of the local area and Wales. However, the provision does not support pupils across the school to have a sound knowledge of the culture of the local area and Wales.

The school plans well for pupils to understand the importance of being physically active through organised lessons and activities such as walking a daily mile. The regular yoga sessions develop pupils' understanding of the importance of both a healthy body and a healthy mind. Staff ensure that there are suitable opportunities to teach the pupils about eating healthily.

The provision for a very few pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is sound. The school supports pupils with physical impairments or behaviour, emotional, and social needs highly effectively and works with a wide range of external agencies to support the pupils and parents successfully. On the whole, the school plans literacy and numeracy activities effectively to support the learning of pupils with ALN, and as a result these pupils make suitable progress from their individual starting points. However, specific strategies to support the pupils are not always used consistently enough within lessons.

The school provides numerous opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their learning environment as well as holding formal positions of responsibility. Older pupils can apply for a wide variety of roles such as School Ambassadors or Red Cap first-aiders and are appointed by the headteacher to leadership positions such as Head Boy and Head Girl, or to the Junior Leadership Team. These roles support the development of their self-confidence and help pupils influence the work of the school.

The school creates and maintains a safe environment for all pupils and leaders have successfully embedded a strong culture of safeguarding, that includes effective site security. The strong links with the local police officer who regularly visits the school to lead sessions about 'stranger danger', online safety and drugs and substance misuse, develop the pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves safe in the wider community. The school works closely with the pupils and their families whose attendance is not good enough and for those who are late in the morning. This has a positive impact on improving attendance rates for these pupils.

Leadership and management

The committed and passionate headteacher, ably assisted by a strong deputy headteacher, provides effective leadership. Leaders, staff and governors have a strong understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local area. They work conscientiously to meet these needs, to ensure that economic disadvantage does not impact their pupils' educational attainment.

Leaders have a clear vision that has a robust focus on well-being, inclusion, and placing the school at the heart of the community. They engage successfully with all stakeholders and are committed to deliver the vision in the day-to-day running of the

school. All adults place a strong emphasis on the importance of showing care and consideration for each other and demonstrate a high level of commitment to making everyone's time in school positive and enjoyable. A highly motivated team of staff is the result of the support and guidance provided on whole school issues and the high quality of the well-being strategies used by senior leaders.

Senior leaders are developing purposefully arrangements to distribute leadership roles and hold staff to account for the quality and effect of their work. Leaders focus on refining the quality of teaching and embedding a common understanding of professional values among the staff. As a result, there is a clear consistency in the school's provision, including in teaching approaches. Overall, all staff understand their roles and responsibilities well.

The school is an effective learning community. The performance management system for staff is robust and all staff have access to relevant professional development opportunities. These have had a positive impact on developing staff expertise and on improving pupil outcomes. For example, training to improve pupils' reading skills as well as the programmes to support the well-being of vulnerable pupils have been successful in improving pupils' comprehension of texts and supporting pupils to return to normal school routines following disruption caused by the pandemic. The school works very well with other schools in its cluster to develop professional practice.

Leaders undertake a wide range of monitoring activities that help them evaluate the quality of the school's work purposefully. They use a comprehensive set of approaches to gathering first-hand evidence including, learning walks, scrutiny of pupils' books and analysing data that measures pupils' progress, to inform their self-evaluation process. These processes help them have a broad understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, overtime the school has identified the need to improve standards of pupils' oracy and pupils' input into improving their own learning. As a result, the pupils have excellent oracy skills and pupils are beginning to assess their own work purposefully. However, the priorities are often too broad to move the school forward and they do not focus sharply enough on improving provision and pupils' learning, such as to improve the standards of pupils' Welsh language skills. The plan aligns successfully to addressing national and local priorities such as developing elements of the Curriculum for Wales and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment.

The governing body has a sound understanding of pupils' needs and knows the community that the school serves very well. It has maintained its supportive role and continues to undertake its statutory duties effectively, such as ensuring suitable arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. However, governors' understanding of the school's main strengths and areas of improvement is not strong enough. The pandemic restrictions impacted on their 'hands on' approach and, as a result, they are currently overly reliant on the information provided by leaders to evaluate the work of the school. The governing body monitors the school's finances well and challenges leaders regarding financial management and the use of grants, rigorously. Governors ensure that the school uses the pupil development grant and other Welsh Government grants effectively to improve pupils' literacy skills and support the emotional development of more vulnerable pupils. Governors work with school leaders to promote a robust safeguarding culture.

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

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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