



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

**A report on**

**Pen Afan Primary School  
Western Terrace  
Blaengwynfi  
Port Talbot  
SA13 3YE**

**Date of inspection: January 2020**

**by**

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

## About Pen Afan Primary School

Pen Afan Primary School is in Blaengwynfi in the Neath Port Talbot local authority. There are 130 pupils on roll, including 24 nursery pupils who attend part-time. There are five mixed-age classes.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the past three years is around 30%. This is well above the average for Wales of 18%. The school has identified around 38% of pupils as having special educational needs. This is considerably higher than the national average of 21%. Nearly all pupils are white British and speak English at home. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

Pen Afan Primary School, along with Glyncorwg, Croeserw and Cymer Afan Primary Schools, is part of the Upper Afan Valley Federation of Schools, which formed in September 2013. The federation was previously one of five schools, but reduced to four primary schools after the closure of Cymer Afan Comprehensive School in July 2019.

The headteacher of the federation took up the post in September 2019; he had been the primary phase leader since 2013. Each primary school has a lead learner who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school.

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

Nearly all pupils behave very well at school. They are kind and courteous to each other and respectful to staff and visitors. Most display good levels of wellbeing at school. They engage positively with learning experiences and develop beneficial strategies to help them deal with any social and emotional challenges that life presents. Most pupils make suitable progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs generally do well at school from their individual starting points. However, pupils, especially the more able, do not always make the progress they could and in general, many do not have strong independent learning skills.

Staff provide high levels of care support and guidance for pupils and establish respectful relationships with them. These relationships ensure a calm environment that benefits all members of the school community. Teachers provide pupils with a suitably balanced curriculum that engages their interests well but does not consistently develop their literacy, numeracy and independent learning skills well enough.

Since the establishment of the federation of primary schools in September 2019, the headteacher, with the support of staff and governors, has made the wellbeing of pupils the top priority. This is evident in the care support and guidance afforded to pupils across the federation of schools. The federation's leaders are beginning to establish a culture of collaboration and sharing which benefits the wellbeing of staff and pupils. This culture sets a positive tone for the work in each of the federation's schools. However, school leaders have not ensured that standards of teaching and learning experiences are consistently good in all of the schools within the federation. Self-evaluation processes and arrangements to share best practice in teaching and in provision for skills are at an early stage of development.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve teaching and learning so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable
- R2 Improve provision to develop pupils' literacy skills
- R3 Develop pupils' independent learning skills, including their capacity to reason, solve problems and improve their own work
- R4 Strengthen the contributions of leaders at all levels, across the federation, particularly to evaluation and improvement work
- R5 Improve attendance and punctuality

## **What happens next**

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

## Main findings

### **Standards: Adequate and needs improvement**

Many pupils start school with language, literacy and mathematical skills below the level expected for their age. During their time at school, most pupils make appropriate progress in their learning and strong progress in wellbeing. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. Generally, pupils who are eligible for free schools meals tend not to develop their skills as well as other pupils. Pupils who are more able do not always reach the standards of which they are capable.

Across the school, most pupils listen to their teachers and other pupils courteously, collaborate purposefully and support one another well. In the nursery and reception classes, pupils identified as requiring additional language support make strong progress in producing speech sounds accurately from their low starting points. By Year 1, many pupils learn to communicate successfully using familiar words and phrases. They begin to experiment with newly learned vocabulary, for example describing dinosaurs as having 'beady eyes'. In key stage 2, many pupils build on these solid foundations well. They speak clearly and fluently, varying the types of sentences they use. A few older pupils are articulate and confident speakers. However, in general, pupils in key stage 2 do not extend their answers sufficiently or build on others' comments well enough during class discussions.

Many pupils in the foundation phase make appropriate progress in reading. They recognise common words and show a good awareness of full stops when reading simple story books. However, a minority rely too heavily on memorising words and do not have a secure enough knowledge of phonics to tackle unknown words. As pupils move through key stage 2, their progress in developing reading skills and strategies accelerates. In Years 5 and 6, most pupils choose books according to their interests and at a level appropriate for their ability. Many of them read with good fluency and expression. A few pupils who are more able show good reading stamina, becoming absorbed in challenging novels with complex plots. They use contextual cues well to make meaning from unfamiliar phrases, such as 'to the contrary'. However, the limited vocabulary knowledge of a minority of pupils hinders their ability to infer meaning from texts.

Most younger pupils in the foundation phase develop appropriate early writing skills. By Year 2, a majority write a series of simple sentences to recount an experience and to give instructions. Their spelling of high-frequency words is generally secure. In key stage 2, many pupils plan and write for a suitable range of purposes and audiences. By Year 6, pupils who are more able, write independently and at length. They develop a good understanding of spelling conventions. However, overall, pupils do not use a broad enough vocabulary in their writing or use a wide enough variety of sentence structures. Across the school, too many pupils make repeated errors with basic sentence punctuation and do not develop legible and fluent handwriting. They rarely redraft their writing to improve its quality.

In the foundation phase, most pupils show enthusiasm towards the Welsh language. They develop a useful vocabulary of the Welsh words for numbers, colours, foods

and the weather. They use simple phrases competently as part of their everyday routines. In key stage 2, many pupils use their Welsh suitably to hold simple conversations, describing their favourite hobbies and whether they agree or disagree with their friend's choice. They read a range of stories with growing understanding and generally accurate pronunciation.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make solid progress in developing their mathematical skills. Many pupils in the reception class develop a good understanding of the language of position and direction, for example when playing hide and seek. They use balancing scales to find out how much the three bears' bowls of porridge weigh. By Year 2, many pupils gather and record data effectively and subtract numbers within 20 confidently. However, their ability to set out their work independently and to choose their own methods is limited. Through key stage 2, most pupils achieve standards in number, measure, shape and space at a level appropriate for their age. For example, most Year 4 pupils are competent in using a range of methods to add three-digit numbers. By Year 6, many pupils use algebra successfully. However, pupils' ability to collect, present and interpret data in key stage 2, particularly those who are more able, is underdeveloped. Across the school, pupils apply only a limited range of numeracy and problem-solving skills appropriately in other areas of the curriculum.

Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing appropriately. Younger pupils in the foundation phase use tablet computers confidently to record their work. For instance, they use an app to create a mind map of ideas for describing dinosaurs and insert suitable photos to illustrate them. They use their modelling skills effectively to direct the wolf to each little pig's house. As they move through key stage 2, nearly all pupils are confident in uploading their work to an online platform. By Year 6, most pupils create and interrogate databases successfully, for example to retrieve and compare information about planets in the solar system. However, they do not make strong progress with their communication skills or in using spreadsheets.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and well mannered, greeting school visitors cheerfully. They support and care for each other well, and show respect to adults. Pupils have a good understanding of class routines and move calmly between activities. Nearly all pupils settle to their learning quickly and sustain interest in tasks and activities well. They work purposefully as individuals, in pairs and in groups, respecting the contributions of others.

Most pupils engage well in their learning and many persevere during challenges, such as when using their literacy and numeracy skills to plan a wedding for Henry VIII. However, in general, pupils' independent learning skills are not strong and this limits their capacity to improve their own work or seek out solutions to problems for themselves.

Pupils have a beneficial understanding of the importance of making healthy choices when eating and drinking. For example, younger pupils speak clearly about the effects of fizzy drinks on teeth. Pupils often buy fruit from the school tuck shop and

explain clearly how fruit and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet. Most pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet and digital technology. For example, older pupils talk confidently about using a mobile phone safely.

Nearly all pupils display positive attitudes to physical activities. Pupils in Year 6 work energetically to improve their fitness and flexibility when taking part in circuit training. Younger pupils develop their stamina in a 'pedal power disco' where they cycle to music. Pupils take part enthusiastically in the wide range of after school clubs and residential visits, which benefit them physically, as well as contributing to their general sense of wellbeing.

Pupils develop their leadership skills and awareness of responsibility well through their work in the many pupil voice groups in the school. They make purposeful decisions about improving aspects of school life. For example, the active school council liaises with the parent teacher association to purchase playground equipment for them to use at lunchtime. Members of the eco-club place bird feeders and a 'bug hotel' in the school grounds to attract insects and wildlife. They also lead regular assemblies that develop pupils' understanding of sustainability and recycling well.

Pupils know that attendance is important and value the weekly reward for the class with the highest attendance. However, attendance rates are below the average when compared with similar schools over the last three years. A few pupils arrive late for school and this means that occasionally they miss valuable learning, such as reading support sessions.

Many pupils develop a mature empathy towards others and have a clear understanding of their needs. For example, older pupils talk compassionately and sensitively about their work in supporting the local food bank. Pupils raise money for a number of local and national charities by taking part in a fun run and wearing 'grey for the day', for example.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement**

Across the school, staff develop respectful relationships with pupils. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and establish a positive atmosphere for learning. Teachers provide pupils with a range of relevant experiences across the breadth of the curriculum that they enjoy. These experiences engage pupils successfully and sustain their interest in learning. Teachers are beginning to incorporate pupils' ideas about what they would like to learn into their planning appropriately.

Teachers organise many beneficial visits to places of interest that link well to pupils' topics, help them to develop their life skills and support their appreciation of the natural environment of Wales. For example, during a residential visit to Margam Park, older pupils investigated how water shapes the land by studying the Nant Phillip River. They have opportunities to learn in real-life contexts, for instance to measure the depth and width of the river.

Well-structured foundation phase provision ensures that pupils are familiar with daily routines. Activities, such as joining in with songs and rhymes at the start of the school day contribute well to pupils' early language development and to their

confidence as members of the school community. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn through play. However, opportunities for pupils to explore and direct their own learning, particularly in the outdoors, are more limited. Within set tasks and a few creative learning experiences, adults occasionally provide too much direction or do too much of the work for pupils. Focused language interventions, which learning support assistants carry out daily, are effective in helping many pupils to develop their communication skills from low starting points.

Generally, teachers use an effective range of approaches to capture and sustain pupils' attention. For example, they use carefully chosen video clips to stimulate learning at the beginning of lessons. They ask a suitable range of questions to help pupils recall what they already know and, in the best practice, develop pupils' thinking and reasoning successfully. In a few instances, teachers set clear expectations for learning that support pupils to be successful in their work. They reinforce learning well by providing pupils with opportunities to assess their own work against these expectations. However, across the school, there is not a shared understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and learning, particularly in relation to the development of pupils' skills.

Teachers do not always ensure that lessons build well on pupils' prior achievements. For example, teachers' written feedback generally praises effort. It does not identify what pupils do well in relation to the development of their skills or focus on helping them to improve aspects of their work. As a result, pupils do not always understand the next steps in their learning. This often leads to repetition of work at a similar standard. For example, when re-drafting written work, pupils' final versions are the same as or in a few instances less accurate than their original work. Overall, teachers do not support pupils well enough to develop the skills they need to take responsibility for their own learning and progress.

There are regular opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills, for example through regular guided reading and phonics sessions. Teachers ensure that pupils write regularly, at length for a variety of purposes and audiences. However, they do not plan well enough to ensure that pupils build and use their literacy skills progressively in lessons or over time.

Pupils have suitable opportunities to use numeracy skills across the curriculum, for example to calculate the cost of a soldier's uniform. These tasks challenge pupils to use their mathematical knowledge at an appropriate level. However, other tasks do not always provide the right level of challenge for pupils. In particular, low-level tasks such as completing worksheets limit pupils' progress in developing their independent learning skills. Consequently, teachers are not always successful in challenging all pupils to make as much progress as they could, particularly those who are more able.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is appropriate. The school has raised the profile of the Welsh language successfully, which is leading to increased opportunities for pupils to speak Welsh. As a result, pupils' Welsh language skills are improving. They are developing confidence to use Welsh in lessons and less formal situations such as play times. Provision for pupils to develop and apply their ICT skills is appropriate.



## **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school is an inclusive community that cares well for its pupils. Staff and pupils take pride in their school and interact respectfully with each other in a calm and friendly environment. The school supports the social and moral development of pupils well through the care support and guidance it provides.

The school has effective procedures to track and monitor pupils' wellbeing and appropriate processes to monitor their progress. Teachers identify pupils with special educational needs and those that require extra support to learn promptly. Provision for these pupils is strong. The school uses a wide range of programmes that meet their learning and wellbeing needs successfully. For example, withdrawal sessions for younger pupils support their language development well. Detailed individual education plans provide clear and measurable targets that pupils understand and know how to achieve. Teachers provide parents with helpful support and advice on how they can support their children at home to work towards their personal goals. Staff review pupils' progress with parents and pupils regularly.

A wide range of valuable programmes such as regular wellbeing support sessions help pupils to deal effectively with friendship issues and control their emotions sensibly. These also help pupils develop practical strategies to help them manage changes in school and at home positively.

There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their decision-making and leadership skills through a range of pupil groups such as the 'mini police' and 'cwiw Cymraeg'. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider community. For example, the school choir sing regularly at the local church and perform for residents at the local old people's home. Events such as the 'Urdd Jambori' and performances at a local theatre contribute beneficially to pupils' cultural development. Worthwhile daily acts of collective worship develop pupils' spiritual awareness and appreciation of diversity appropriately.

Provision to support pupils to learn about careers and the world of work, for example through the school's partnership with Swansea University, is valuable. This helps to broaden pupils' horizons and raise their aspirations.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking and provides many opportunities for pupils to be active and to understand the benefits of physical exercise. For example, all pupils have opportunities to attend clubs for activities such as netball and craft. Additional visits to a local climbing centre broaden pupils' experiences effectively and support their physical and personal development well. Pupils have good opportunities to learn how to stay safe, for example by attending first aid workshops and working with the local police to understand about anti-social behaviour. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school provides parents with useful information about events and visits through apps, social media and newsletters. It provides them with suggestions to help them support their child with their reading at home and highlights the importance of attending school regularly.

## **Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement**

Since taking up overall leadership of the federation in September 2019, the headteacher has worked successfully to develop a shared vision for ensuring the wellbeing and nurture of pupils across the federation. This vision includes a commitment to meeting the physical, social and emotional needs of pupils. This work is effective and ensures that all the schools benefit from a calm atmosphere where pupils behave well and engage with their learning positively.

The vision to promote collaboration between the schools is developing well and is becoming influential in a number of ways. These include shared planning, consistent approaches to safeguarding pupils and common approaches to financial management. The developing culture of sharing is beneficial for staff and pupils. For example, it ensures that pupils receive a similar range of learning experiences and leads financial efficiencies so that events such as educational visits are viable and affordable.

In addition to the headteacher, there is a senior member of staff in each school. These members of staff undertake the role of lead learners. They take day-to-day responsibility for the leadership of school sites in the absence of the headteacher. In addition, they lead and monitor curriculum planning for pairs of year groups across the federation. This is beneficial in promoting shared working and building a team ethos. However, as a result of their focus on leading specific age groups across the federation, in too many cases lead learners do not have a strong enough understanding of the quality of provision or the standards and progress of pupils in their own schools. In a few instances, lead learners have made valuable contributions to the professional skills of colleagues, for example by ensuring consistent use of the foundation phase profile when pupils join each school and by raising the profile of the Welsh language across the federation.

School leaders gather considerable amounts of pupil progress information in an electronic tracking system. The headteacher uses this and other information, for example evidence from learning walks, to identify a few appropriate areas for improvement across the federation. These include the need to improve pupils' Welsh language skills. However, the headteacher and lead learners do not always consider other first-hand evidence well enough, such as the range and quality of work in pupils' books and in lessons when evaluating provision and standards. Consequently, leaders do not always identify important shortcomings in pupils' skill development or opportunities to improve teaching and learning experiences well enough. Over time, leaders have not drawn well enough on examples of highly effective teaching and learning that exist within the federation to improve professional practice and raise standards. Overall, the federation does not have a clear strategy to improve teaching in all schools. This limits the standards that pupils achieve.

There is effective co-ordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs. Each school has an effective leader for special educational needs provision. They have developed a strong culture of sharing practice, resources and practical advice. This benefits teachers and support staff well and ensures that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Professional learning opportunities for teaching assistants are beneficial. They ensure that these members of staff have the skills to support pupils to progress through a range of useful intervention strategies. This is particularly valuable in enhancing nurture provision for pupils.

Governors aspire to provide high standard of education in the Upper Afan Valley. They provide appropriate support and challenge to the federation's leaders, for example in relation to the allocation of funding from budget to each of the schools. They know the federation's priorities for improvement and have suitable processes in place to monitor progress towards these goals. For example, governors look at pupils' work and take part in learning walks. They contribute appropriately to the developing culture of shared working, for example by supporting the federation to develop shared policies and processes for safeguarding.

School leaders allocate funding appropriately to support school improvement. They make suitable use additional funding from the pupil development grant to fund staff and intervention programmes to improve pupils' wellbeing and basic skills.

## 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](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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

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