



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

A report on

Pil Primary School

**Pyle Inn Way
Pyle
CF33 6AB**

Date of inspection: July 2022

by

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

About Pil Primary School

Name of provider	Pil Primary School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	N/A
Number of pupils on roll	234
Pupils of statutory school age	169
Number in nursery classes	42
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 %)	33%
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%)	12.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2011
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	04/07/2022

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

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to school, behave well and enjoy their learning. They form strong relationships with adults and one another and show respect and consideration for all members of the school community. Most pupils focus well in lessons and demonstrate interest in their learning. As a result, most make good progress in developing a broad base of skills and knowledge that underpins their learning across the curriculum well.

Teachers provide a range of learning experiences that engage pupils' interest and motivate them to succeed. They make good use of topical issues and visits and visitors to relate pupils' learning to the school's context and to the wider world. The school's provision for developing pupils' core skills, including their use of the Welsh language, is a notable strength. Teachers support pupils to understand how to move their learning forwards, but opportunities for pupils to think creatively or exercise their independence are not always given sufficient priority. All adults nurture pupils' well-being sensitively.

Leaders provide strong strategic direction for the school. They foster collaboration among staff, build professional expertise and strengthen partnerships with parents successfully. This helps the school to address national priorities such as curriculum reform and pupils' well-being effectively. Leaders set clear goals for improvement and consider the use of resources carefully. However, they do not always monitor or evaluate the impact of changes on the quality of teaching or the range of learning experiences closely enough.

Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen monitoring procedures to focus precisely on the impact of teaching
- R2 Improve opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills progressively
- R3 Refine teaching to enable pupils to exercise more independence in what and how they learn

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils enter the school with skills at or slightly below those expected for their age. Overall, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress in their learning from their individual starting points, and achieve well.

Nearly all pupils interact confidently with adults and other children and talk enthusiastically about their school and their learning. For example, younger pupils listen attentively to stories and enjoy joining in with familiar phrases. Many older pupils develop an extensive vocabulary and listen respectfully to others. Nearly all pupils speak confidently and express their ideas clearly, for instance when sharing their views about important environmental issues. Many pupils' reading skills are developing well. The youngest pupils use an appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words. They discuss the books that they have read and explain why they enjoyed them. Many older pupils read accurately in various contexts. They vary their tone of voice and use punctuation correctly to show their understanding. As they move through the school most pupils use their reading skills independently to support their learning in other areas of the curriculum successfully.

Across the school, most pupils make strong progress in developing their writing skills. The youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills appropriately and start to form letters correctly. For example, pupils in the nursery class engage in making meaningful marks to show the journey a bird makes to its nest. They begin to use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them read and write a few familiar words, such as their names. As they move through the school, most pupils write with increasing confidence for different purposes, both in their literacy lessons and across the curriculum. Pupils in Year 3 write persuasive letters to a local supermarket requesting they stock more Fair-Trade produce and pupils in Year 5 use the poetry of Benjamin Zephania as a stimulus for their own writing. In many cases, pupils' writing is thoughtful, grammatically accurate and correctly punctuated. Most older pupils organise their work into paragraphs, using a variety of sentence types and spelling a wide range of common words correctly. Many more able pupils employ a broad vocabulary and write well for effect. For instance, they use words precisely to create an atmosphere and connect a character's actions to their thoughts and feelings skillfully so that the reader can empathise.

Most pupils make good progress in their mathematical development and enjoy the mathematical tasks they undertake. In the nursery class, pupils engage enthusiastically in practical activities that support the development of their mathematical vocabulary and their number skills. For example when outside digging for big potatoes and tiny onions and when counting their harvest. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a secure grasp of appropriate number facts and handle money correctly. Pupils in Years 3 to 5 sustain this progress well, particularly in their use of number. Most pupils carry out a range of calculations confidently. For example, most pupils use a variety of strategies to multiply two-digit and three-digit numbers accurately. Most pupils in Year 6 show a good understanding of decimals, ratio and percentages. Across the school, most pupils use their numeracy skills effectively in other aspects of their learning. For example, pupils in Year 3 apply their

mathematical knowledge purposefully when designing and operating the 'Cocoa Café'. They investigate Fairtrade costs, identify the most popular items on their menu and calculate their overall profit. Older pupils apply their numeracy skills to examine the properties of different natural materials while on a local field trip effectively.

Most pupils use technology confidently to support their learning across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 1 use green screen technology to create an exciting film about dinosaurs and many pupils in Year 2 use tablet computers confidently to access their online reading library. In the older classes, most pupils use their digital skills for independent research and to record their learning effectively. For example, Year 6 pupils collaborate on an online research document about a local Olympic triathlete and prepare a 'Survival Guide' information leaflet using publishing software. Nearly all pupils create imaginative presentations, such as in Year 4 where pupils record and upload their film about Henry Tudor so it can be viewed online.

Nearly all pupils make strong progress in developing their use of spoken Welsh and show enjoyment in learning the language. Across classes, they participate actively in daily Helpwr Heddiw sessions, using familiar patterns and vocabulary to play a range of games confidently. Most pupils ask and answer questions readily and respond appropriately to adults' use of Welsh in comments and instructions, often without hesitation. Younger pupils often use Welsh in their daily routines, including in songs and rhymes, and quickly become familiar with a good range of words and phrases, for instance to describe their feelings and the weather. As they move through the school, most pupils speak confidently and begin using their growing knowledge more conversationally. For example, they share personal information in a range of everyday contexts, such as to describe what they enjoy doing in their leisure time. By Year 6, many pupils challenge themselves to extend their use of Welsh by increasing the variety of phrases they use. Many pupils enjoy adding new expressions they acquire to convey personality and humour in their dialogue successfully.

Across the school most pupils make good progress in developing their physical and social skills. For example, younger pupils develop cooperation and coordination through activities in the indoor and outdoor areas effectively. Many pupils use their communication and thinking skills purposefully, such as when considering their needs and wants or to justify their opinions. Overall, most pupils' ability to apply their creativity, particularly in independent activities, is less well developed. As a result, pupils do not always experiment with a range of approaches or seek alternative solutions to tasks.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils have re-adjusted well to school life following a difficult period. They demonstrate a positive attitude towards school and show resilience in their learning. This helps them to make the most of the learning opportunities provided for them.

Nearly all pupils relate well to each other and to adults. They show a good understanding of school rules and routines and are courteous and respectful towards each other. As a result, most pupils behave well during lessons and focus appropriately on their learning. New pupils settle into the school well and readily become active participants in school life. Pupils who require help to manage their feelings benefit from the active support the school provides and adapt well in dealing

with difficulties they experience. Pupils make good use of the spacious outdoor area to play and interact positively. Throughout the school, nearly all pupils demonstrate an appropriate awareness of the importance of keeping safe online, for example when talking about what personal information to share or how to set up a secure password.

Most pupils develop the skills and qualities needed to succeed as learners. They settle to work quickly and demonstrate interest in their learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 engage deeply when watching and then discussing a film extract about the impact of climate change on the habitats of different animals. They express their emotions openly and are supportive of one another's views. Nearly all pupils are keen to talk about their work, what they have achieved and how they can develop their learning further. For example, pupils in Year 3 feel empowered to use the knowledge they have gained through their recent topic to write persuasive letters encouraging a local supermarket to support ethical producers. Pupils are proactive in fundraising for a variety of charities including Children in Need, the British Red Cross and Fairtrade.

All pupils are proud of their school and are keen to express their views on school life. Nearly all feel that they have meaningful opportunities to express their views through a variety of pupil voice groups. Many pupils, including those with additional learning needs, take on leadership responsibilities, for instance through groups such as the Criw Cymraeg. This has led to increased use of spoken Welsh around the school and is reflected in the positive attitude most pupils show to using the language. Nearly all pupils show a good understanding of children's rights and value the way the school promotes these, for example through the creation of class charters. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They welcome opportunities to support each other through worthwhile cooperation between classes. For example, older pupils enjoy helping their younger peers to develop an outdoor garden area. This activity cements relationships between different year groups and enhances the strong sense of community pupils feel.

Most pupils respond positively to verbal feedback from adults during lessons. This gives them the confidence to make progress in their work. Most use this feedback to focus their efforts appropriately. Most pupils persevere when tackling new challenges or difficult concepts. They make good use of resources to help themselves when they become stuck and appreciate the support of their classmates who take on the role of 'experts' in areas where they feel highly confident.

Many pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They identify the main food groups when creating healthy meals and explain why certain foods should be consumed less often. Many pupils access the fresh fruit that is available to them in class. Older pupils show a keen awareness of the effect of human activity on the natural environment. For example, Pupils in Year 5 consider the impact of food miles and discuss how these could be reduced to minimize the negative consequences of transporting foods over long distances.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is making steady progress on its journey towards implementing the new Curriculum for Wales. Teachers work together to plan learning experiences that reflect the school's ethos well. They provide a good range of opportunities that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world around them and encourage them to be ambitious in their aspirations for the future.

Teachers plan carefully to ensure that the four purposes of the curriculum for Wales are reflected in the teaching and learning experiences the school provides. For example, they provide good opportunities for pupils to discuss ethical issues such as global warming and equality. As a result, pupils think carefully about how they can make a difference in their local area, for example by encouraging more active travel to school. Following the easing of restrictions resulting from the pandemic, staff have begun reintroducing a variety of purposeful educational visits and visitors to school. These enrich the school's curriculum well and support pupils' interests and knowledge effectively. For example, older pupils recall learning how to use a compass on a school trip, which helps them when exploring co-ordinates and direction in a mathematics lesson.

All adults develop positive relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour skilfully. As a result, nearly all pupils are respectful, confident and enthusiastic about their time in school. In most lessons, adults explain activities and concepts well so that pupils engage readily in their tasks. Teachers make helpful references to pupils' previous learning. They use a variety of different approaches including play-based tasks, direct teaching, small group work, and independent activities. However, they do not always provide enough opportunity for pupils to play a worthwhile role in shaping what or how they learn. Nearly all adults have high expectations of pupils, and their effective use of varied questions ensures that learning usually proceeds at a good pace. Where teaching is less effective, adults scaffold learning too tightly or assist pupils to complete tasks rather than supporting them to develop their understanding and independence effectively.

Teachers plan for the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills progressively. As a result, most pupils make good progress and apply these skills effectively in other areas of their learning. For example, the consistent provision of guided reading sessions impacts positively on pupils' comprehension skills and helps them to understand what they read when carrying out independent research using the internet. However, teachers provide fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills or to express themselves imaginatively. This limits their scope to engage with a broad variety of artistic experiences and to explore different ways to communicate their learning.

The school's provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills supports most pupils to make strong progress. Teachers act as good role models for the use of spoken Welsh. Many speak confidently and vary the language they use to provide a stimulating context for learning. Teachers organise a beneficial link between pupils in Year 6 and their peers in a nearby Welsh-medium school. Pupils value this relationship and speak positively about the friendships they build and the confidence it has given them in their ability to use the Welsh language to communicate.

Teachers provide a suitable range of opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. For example, they use the work of Josef Herman as a stimulus for pupils' charcoal sketches of pit ponies in Year 3. They arrange a visit from a local Olympic athlete as a starting point for research work in Year 6 and use pupils' digital skills to locate lifeboat stations around the Welsh coast.

Many teachers use the outdoors to engage pupils in their learning appropriately. For example, they use the vegetable garden as a setting for measuring activities and provide a digging area for younger pupils to learn to use hand tools safely and to co-operate on tasks together. However, teachers do not exploit the school's extensive grounds to enable pupils to benefit from a broad range of outdoor learning experiences.

Teachers generally give clear explanations in lessons that enable pupils to undertake their work confidently. Most set clear success criteria and refer to these helpfully when supporting pupils to tackle tasks or to reflect on their progress. They ask a variety of appropriate questions to check pupils' understanding and to extend their knowledge and skills. Teachers often provide focused verbal and written feedback to pupils that helps them to develop and improve their written work in particular. Teachers and learning support officers establish a constructive classroom climate where pupils are happy to share their learning and to discuss their progress with their peers. For example, pupils in Year 3 enjoy listening to a postcard one of them has written, clearly identifying what has been done well, and providing useful suggestions to make it even better.

Care, support and guidance

Teachers and learning support officers work well together to promote and develop pupils' well-being. They place a high priority on ensuring that they address the needs of all pupils. During recent disruption caused by the pandemic, the school supported pupils and families effectively. For example, by distributing digital devices to help pupils access remote learning and to maintain their relationships with their peers and with staff online.

Teachers track pupils' progress at regular intervals and identify necessary actions to develop each pupil's individual skills. The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) contributes purposefully to their progress. Pupils who require additional support are identified quickly and, by the time they leave Year 6, nearly all make at least the expected progress from their starting points. The additional learning needs co-ordinator works efficiently to organise a beneficial programme of tailored support for individual pupils. Teachers and learning support officers liaise closely to deliver this support successfully. The school also draws effectively on external agencies to provide further support when needed. All pupils with additional learning needs have pupil profiles that reflect their needs precisely and take into account their views and feelings. This ensures that pupils' interests remain at the heart of this process. All learning support officers receive training in a wide range of intervention strategies and carry out their work skilfully. The school has been diligent in addressing the requirements of ALN reform and is well prepared for further implementation.

The school provides useful guidance for all pupils as they prepare for transition to their secondary school. In addition to visiting the school, there are opportunities for pupils to develop new skills. For example, Year 6 pupils complete an online sequence of Spanish lessons that help to prepare them for their future learning. Identified pupils benefit from enhanced transition that includes extra school visits that help them to feel more confident about their move. The family engagement officer is highly effective in providing extensive support for pupils and their families through her dual role in both the primary and secondary school. She makes visits to pupils' homes to build positive relationships with parents and carers and is highly accessible to those in need of support.

Teachers develop pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe online effectively. The school also provides sessions to improve parents' knowledge of potential harms linked to the unsafe use of technology so that they know how to reduce these risks at home. The school engages successfully with a range of visitors to promote pupils' wider well-being. For example, by arranging first aid training for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The school has fostered positive links within the local community and encourages pupils to benefit from access to a range of clubs beyond the school. Across the school, adults use a good variety of resources and approaches to help build pupils' confidence and their ability to manage their feelings appropriately.

The school provides suitable opportunities, such as through regular assemblies, for pupils to participate in collective worship and to reflect on important issues and values. For example, leaders deliver an engaging assembly for younger pupils that makes use of an amusing video and a simple story to encourage pupils to think about what it means to be a good friend. The school promotes a core set of values consistently. This means that pupils develop a clear sense of right and wrong and recognise the importance of treating others fairly. Teachers develop pupils' understanding of rights and responsibilities beneficially. As a result, pupils are respectful towards others and mindful of the consequences of their own and others' actions.

The school uses a range of strategies to promote and improve rates of attendance. The family engagement officer supports this work effectively. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.

Leadership and management

Leaders set a clear strategic direction for the school that focuses on securing pupils' progress and nurturing their well-being. The headteacher demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring that the school's provision supports all pupils to develop their key skills successfully. Senior leaders understand their roles well and contribute purposefully to this aim. All staff have reviewed the school's vision to focus clearly on the core purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales and to emphasise the school's ambition for its pupils. As a result, there is a vigorous shared purpose at all levels across the school.

Leaders plan conscientiously for the future development of the school. They take full account of national priorities and tailor improvement objectives to address these appropriately. For example, leaders and staff have collaborated purposefully to

strengthen the school's work in supporting pupils' well-being in response to the challenges brought by the pandemic. Whole school initiatives and innovations that emerge from the professional research interests of individual staff members enhance the school's provision beneficially.

Leaders are committed to developing the capacity of the staff team. They provide a good range of worthwhile opportunities for teachers and learning support officers to extend their knowledge and skills. This ensures that there is a shared understanding of key strategies that promote pupils' progress well. For example, leaders make effective use of training days to revisit and refine aspects of the school's provision for developing pupils' reading skills. This results in a consistently high quality of guided reading sessions that have a strong impact on pupils' progress during their time in school.

Leaders engage a range of stakeholders in contributing to the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for development. For example, leaders surveyed parents to gather their views on the usefulness of a digital reading resource. Following their feedback, leaders reallocated funding to improve the range of physical books so that parents can support pupils' reading at home in a way that they find more engaging. Leaders' willingness to consult with parents and their proactive support for families during the pandemic exemplify the effective partnership between home and school.

Staff also meet with pupils to gather their views on the learning experiences the school provides, and leaders review teachers' learning plans and pupils' work systematically. As a result, leaders have a broad overview of progress on key objectives. Overall, however, monitoring does not focus sharply enough on specific targets for improvement and leaders do not use direct evidence on the quality of teaching to shape their understanding fully. This means that they do not always identify precisely enough specific aspects of teaching or the curriculum that require development.

Leaders enable staff to prepare purposefully for the new curriculum. Teachers work in teams to lead specific aspects of the school's approach. They reflect on the progress made in other schools and use professional networks to expand their own knowledge. With the support and guidance of senior leaders, they are beginning to trial changes to their practice, for instance through the introduction of learning zones that enable pupils to apply their skills in a range of contexts.

Leaders establish a supportive environment for teachers to explore different ways for pupils to learn. For instance, they have allocated funding and fostered collaboration between staff in the nursery class to develop a more child-led approach. These changes support the development of pupils' social, communication and thinking skills beneficially. Overall, though, teachers have been cautious in experimenting with their everyday practice. This means that aspects of the school's provision, such as the opportunities teachers provide for pupils to develop their creativity or to influence what and how they learn, have not progressed as rapidly as they could.

Governors show strong support for the school and its aims. They monitor the school's finances carefully to make sure that expenditure delivers clear benefits to pupils and provides good value for money. Governors know the focus of the school's current improvement activity well. However, they have little first-hand knowledge of the

impact of this work on the range and quality of the school's provision. Governors ensure that the school takes appropriate steps to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils. They 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:

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