



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

A report on

Penygaer Primary School

**Bryndulais Avenue
Llanelli
SA14 8RS**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Penywaer Primary School

Name of provider	Penywaer Primary School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	212
Pupils of statutory school age	157
Number in nursery classes	35
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 23.0%)	35.6%
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 16.1%)	36.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2011
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	11/11/2014
Start date of inspection	13/03/2023

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

Leaders have developed an inclusive culture at Penygaer Primary School where pupils interact well with adults and each other. They are courteous and polite, and nearly all pupils behave very well. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own well-being and behaviour and this contributes effectively to their enthusiastic approach to school life. This inclusive culture helps pupils to build confidence and develop their self-esteem, whilst also respecting the views and feelings of others.

In a few areas of the curriculum, pupils make good progress in developing their skills, for example in oracy and mathematics. However, as pupils move through the school, the progress they make is inconsistent. As a result, too many pupils do not develop their skills well enough or make sound progress from their starting points. This has a negative impact on their work in other areas of the curriculum.

Although the school is beginning to develop its curriculum appropriately, progress towards implementing the Curriculum for Wales is slow. Teachers use an increasing range of visits and visitors to enhance pupils' experiences. However, the school's curriculum does not offer opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills systematically over time.

The quality of teaching across the school is variable. Often, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and the pace of learning is generally slow. Teachers regularly structure activities too tightly and over-direct pupils' learning. This hampers pupils' capacity to become resilient, independent learners who can work things out for themselves. Teachers' feedback to pupils does not always help them to understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Over time, leaders have not monitored the school's work robustly enough. This means that they have not identified major shortcomings in the school's work or put in place actions to address them. Self-evaluation and improvement activities, as well as professional learning opportunities for staff, do not focus beneficially on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The local authority and governing body recognise the challenges facing the school and are providing additional support. Members of the school's governing body are keen and enthusiastic, but they have been unable to provide effective support and challenge to the school due to an over-reliance of information from leaders about the quality of the school's work.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop leadership at all levels so that leaders have the necessary skills to bring about school improvement
- R2 Ensure that evaluation processes clearly focus on the quality of teaching and pupils' standards
- R3 Improve teaching and assessment across the school
- R4 Improve the curriculum and provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills
- R5 Address the safeguarding issue that was identified during the inspection

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at school, around half of pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points. This includes pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional learning needs (ALN). However, the majority of pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 do not make enough progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding due to a lack of challenge in activities.

Across the school, a majority of pupils listen and respond appropriately to adults and to each other. They ask thoughtful and meaningful questions that develop ideas and make effective contributions that take other pupils' views into account. Many of the youngest pupils express themselves clearly, for example when pupils discuss the story their classmates perform on the class stage. Many of the oldest pupils articulate their ideas appropriately and talk enthusiastically about their work. For example, following a recent visit to Westminster, Year 6 pupils debate the benefits and drawbacks of drinking energy drinks.

A majority of pupils make appropriate progress in developing their reading skills. Most of the youngest pupils quickly learn the sounds of letters and blend these sounds together suitably when reading. By Year 2, a majority of pupils read confidently, and are happy to tackle unfamiliar words with a variety of strategies. In the older classes, a few pupils name their favourite authors and discuss their style with relevant understanding and clarity. For example, pupils describe the characterisation used by Charles Dickens in a few of his novels. By the time pupils reach Year 6, a majority are competent, confident readers, well equipped to appreciate challenging texts. However, despite recent improvements in their basic reading skills, many older pupils do not apply their higher-level reading skills to access all areas of the curriculum well enough.

A majority of pupils are beginning to improve their ability to write creatively and for a range of purposes. Most of the youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills effectively and many younger pupils progress from mark making to forming letters, words and sentences successfully. By Year 2, many pupils write creatively in basic story form. In general, older pupils take care to present their work neatly and take pride in their presentation. As they progress through the school, a majority of pupils begin to write perceptively in a variety of contexts and, by the time they reach Year 6, many pupils write successfully for a range of purposes. However, many pupils across the school, particularly from Year 3 to Year 6, do not apply their extended writing skills to enrich their work in all areas of the curriculum.

A majority of pupils develop their basic mathematical skills appropriately. From an early age, pupils acquire a useful range of mathematical skills. By Year 2, a majority have a suitable understanding of number facts to 100. They recognise shapes, use money in their play and are developing confidence in telling the time. A majority of pupils in Years 3 to 6 work well with the four rules of number and develop appropriate skills using shape, space and measure. Recently, a minority of pupils have begun to apply their developing numeracy skills purposefully to solve problems, for example when discussing the mean, median and mode of temperatures in other countries. A

minority describe their thinking and reasoning well, and explain how they have reached conclusions, for example when calculating the percentage salary increases in a school environment. However, across the school, the majority of pupils do not apply and understand how to use their numeracy skills purposefully in everyday situations and do not have enough opportunities to develop these skills across the curriculum.

Few pupils make appropriate progress in learning Welsh. Many pupils in the nursery and Reception classes respond appropriately to class instructions by the teacher. By Year 2, most pupils understand and answer questions with simple responses during discussions with teachers and each other. However, although most pupils maintain a positive attitude to speaking Welsh, too few pupils build their knowledge of the Welsh language systematically.

Throughout the school, around half of the pupils make sound progress in developing and using their digital skills. Younger pupils apply their digital skills at an appropriate level for a limited range of purposes. For example, a few pupils use branching software well to produce healthy eating challenges. However, many older pupils do not develop their digital skills suitably to enhance their learning across the curriculum. For example, they do not create databases and spreadsheets confidently or interrogate data with enough understanding.

Most pupils develop appropriate thinking skills under the direction of adults. Nursery pupils use the environment to express their understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, when building a tower from blocks and discussing which is the tallest, they count the blocks to see if they are accurate. However, the majority of pupils across the school do not have the opportunity to apply their thinking and problem-solving skills regularly.

A majority of pupils make suitable progress in their creative skills. Younger pupils participate in dawnsio gwerin (folk dancing) and Year 2 pupils have studied and copied the work of Andy Warhol. Older pupils use pastels and water colours well when painting flowers in the style of artist, Georgia O'Keefe. A majority of pupils in Years 3 to 6 express themselves well through the medium of expressive arts through studying the work of various artists, including those with a Welsh dimension such as Gareth Jones.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure and free from any issues of bullying. They are kind and respectful to adults and to each other. Most pupils are enthusiastic in their learning and collaborate with their peers effectively. Nearly all pupils behave well in class and when they move around the school. They know who to turn to if they need emotional support and make appropriate use of an app to express their feelings.

A majority of pupils understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and know how to make healthy choices in relation to diet, physical activity and emotional well-being. They know how to keep themselves safe online and talk knowledgeably about not sharing personal information or passwords.

Many pupils, including those with ALN, take on leadership roles and responsibilities. A minority of these leadership groups are beginning to have an influence in the life of the school. For example, the Global Goal Keepers have recently promoted the use of a water fountain and they have been instrumental in encouraging their friends to take part in a walk to school challenge. Most pupils are beginning to show an understanding of their role within the community and as global citizens. However, over-direction from staff prevents pupils from developing their leadership skills well enough.

Most pupils engage with new and unfamiliar experiences and ideas enthusiastically. In general, a majority of pupils are interested in their work and devote themselves to tasks, completing them competently. Around half of the pupils maintain their ability to focus on tasks and do not let things distract them. They persevere or seek new solutions when faced with difficulties. Many pupils collaborate effectively in pairs and in small groups and are keen to share and discuss their ideas. For example, Year 6 pupils discuss moral dilemmas about personal safety and drug misuse. However, many older pupils do not display resilience in all tasks consistently.

Most pupils are beginning to influence how and what they learn, and give their views on decisions that may affect them. However, across the school, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their learning.

A minority of pupils value and respond to feedback from adults and their peers. However, due to a lack of opportunity, most pupils have little understanding of how to evaluate their work effectively and, as a result, do not always know how to improve their work well enough.

A majority of pupils are developing well as ethically informed citizens. Pupils participate in a variety of fund-raising activities for charities such as supporting the Ukraine appeal. They are beginning to develop their understanding of the values that underpin the school rules. Most pupils understand the purposes of rules, rewards and punishments both in school, and in wider society. They learn about children's rights, show respect for diversity and value equality. They understand how everyone should be treated regardless of their language, culture or beliefs.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is beginning to develop a vision for the Curriculum for Wales. A minority of staff are beginning to engage with professional learning led by local partner schools, designed to support the co-construction of a broad and balanced curriculum. However, this is in the very early stages of development and not all teachers have benefited currently from these sessions.

Teachers plan learning activities through themes, and these themes, together with a few established resources, form the basis for planned learning. However, the curriculum does not build well-enough on what pupils have learned previously and, as a result, does not develop pupils' knowledge, skills or experiences effectively enough as they move through the school.

The curriculum is enhanced by an increasing range of visits and real-life experiences. For example, older pupils have an allotment in the community where they grow

vegetables. Staff arrange visits for pupils to visit the Swiss Valley Reservoir, Pembrey Country Park and Pembroke Castle for example, to develop their understanding of the locality and of the past. The recent visit of an athletics champion enabled staff to develop an interesting range of purposeful learning activities to develop pupils' oracy and physical skills. However, teachers plan too few opportunities for pupils to progressively develop and use their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not improve and apply these skills well enough.

Teachers provide a few opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wales. For example, many older pupils regularly visit Llyn y Fan Fach and all pupils take part in the school's Eisteddfod. However, the school does not plan well for the structured development of pupils' Welsh oracy skills. As a result, most pupils do not make suitable progress in developing their communication skills in Welsh.

The school has recently re-established plans to develop extended writing throughout the school, although opportunities for pupils to apply these skills across the curriculum are limited. Overall, provision to develop pupils' number skills is effective. However, opportunities for pupils to apply numeracy skills across the curriculum are less well developed.

Provision to develop younger pupils' digital skills is appropriate. However, teachers do not develop older pupils' digital skills well enough or provide enough opportunities for pupils to work with confidence when working with devices and software.

Teachers and support staff have positive working relationships with pupils and most staff manage pupils' behaviour well. In a minority of sessions, teachers engage pupils well and involve them in their learning. Teachers in classes of the younger pupils plan a worthwhile range of activities to support learning both indoors and in the outdoor learning environment. These lessons provide pupils with useful opportunities for independent and collaborative learning. In these lessons, teachers use effective questioning skilfully to help move learning forward and they match learning well to pupils' abilities. However, teachers in the classes of older pupils do not always make the best use of the extensive outdoor environment to support learning.

In general, the quality of teaching across the school varies too much and a majority of sessions are characterised by low expectations of what, and how much, pupils can achieve. In these cases, teachers plan too many low-level tasks, which fill time and do little to motivate pupils or move them on in their learning. In a majority of classes, teachers structure sessions and guide learning too much, causing pupils to become over-reliant on instructions and support from adults. They do not use questioning well enough to extend pupils' thinking or to check understanding. Teachers fail to challenge pupils consistently, which prevents pupils from making the progress of which they are capable. Throughout the school, many teachers do not adapt activities well enough to meet the needs of all pupils.

Feedback to pupils is not helpful enough. Staff do not implement assessment approaches consistently to support pupils across the school. Teachers do not engage sufficiently well with pupils' learning activities to be able to identify and correct misconceptions and offer ways forward. As a result, most pupils do not have

a clear understanding of whether they have completed tasks successfully or what they need to do to improve.

Care, support and guidance

The school provides a caring community and a safe learning environment for pupils and staff. It ensures that the health and well-being of pupils are a continuous priority. Staff successfully promote pupils' emotional health, developing a sense of belonging and enjoyment for all. This enables pupils to engage positively with the experiences and opportunities that the school provides.

Provision to support pupils identified as needing additional support is led and managed effectively. The ALN co-ordinator has a strong understanding of the national reform and has ensured a smooth and well-informed change to new systems. The school extends aspects of its good practice for ALN provision to all pupils by devising a purposeful one-page profile for every pupil in the school. These useful profiles outline their interests, how they like be supported to learn, and their targets for improvement. However, although the school has begun to track the progress of pupils requiring additional support, it does not have a clear enough picture of the progress made by pupils across the school who receive additional support with their learning.

Staff deliver effective support for pupils with ALN through specific well-being support programmes where most pupils make good progress. In general, staff tend to over-direct pupils across the school, including pupils with ALN, during activities. This prevents them from taking ownership of their learning and developing wider skills, such as resilience and the ability to work independently. Overall, the general provision within lessons does not support pupils with different abilities to make the progress of which they are capable.

The school's curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of concepts and values such as diversity, inclusion and equity. Teachers support pupils to be respectful, tolerant and empathetic, for example. Staff promote co-operation, which is reinforced by whole-school expectations of tolerance and consideration, and expect socially responsible behaviour from pupils. They engage appropriately with local and national fundraising events to provide an authentic context for pupils to develop their values and understanding of the needs of others. In the classes of the older pupils, there are worthwhile opportunities for them to ask and explore fundamental questions and consider people's views on gender, race and the difference between right and wrong.

Collective worship provides purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual beliefs and understanding. Teachers encourage pupils to consider their responsibility to each other and the wider community.

The school provides a range of experiences to help pupils to develop an appreciation and understanding of their identity, heritage and culture of Wales. Opportunities to explore the local area and visits to nearby places of interest inspire pupils but are not part of a coherent curriculum offer that develops their skills and understanding over time. The school does not provide sufficient meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop as active citizens, for example by contributing to shaping the life and work of

the school. The school is proactive in supporting good attendance and continues to work hard to encourage regular attendance by all pupils.

Overall, the school's safeguarding culture is appropriate, and staff are committed to keeping learners safe through the ethos they promote. However, a safeguarding issue was brought to the attention of the team during the inspection.

Leadership and management

Leaders promote an ethos in the school where the well-being of pupils and staff is a priority. They ensure that pupils feel happy and safe in school and set high expectations of pupil behaviour.

Although leaders have recently worked with the local authority to establish a vision for the school and address key issues for improvement, there is not a clear enough strategic vision for the curriculum and teaching that is understood by all staff. This hampers the school's ability to make progress in many important areas such as addressing the variable quality of teaching and having a progressive framework for the development of pupils' skills. This has impacted negatively on the progress of a majority of pupils. In a few important areas there are early signs of improvement, but school leaders have not developed a culture of sustained improvement over time.

Leaders are addressing the national ALN reform successfully. However, the school does not address other national priorities, such as improving pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, digital and the Welsh language, well enough.

Senior leaders have recently established a suitable programme of activities to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. This includes an appropriate range of evidence including learning walks, scrutiny of evidence and listening to learners. However, overall, leaders do not use monitoring evidence sufficiently to evaluate progress. As a result, leaders do not have a clear enough picture of the quality of teaching and the impact on pupils' progress in developing and applying knowledge, skills and understanding.

Governors are generally supportive of the school. They have positive relationships with senior leaders, staff and parents and a suitable awareness of national priorities for improvement. They fulfil their duties to promote healthy eating and drinking. They manage the budget efficiently and they know how leaders use the pupil development grant to support vulnerable pupils with their well-being as well as their general progress in skills. However, leaders do not sufficiently monitor the impact that grant spending has on these pupils and, as a result, they are unclear whether the actions taken support pupils well enough. In addition, the skills and understanding of governors are at an early stage of development. Over time, they have been too reliant on leaders' views and information provided about the school, which are not always accurate. This means that they are unable to challenge the school robustly enough and are unaware of the true picture of pupils' progress or issues with the quality of teaching.

Recently, senior leaders have begun to ensure that performance management processes are more robust and staff development activities link suitably to school improvement priorities. However, leaders do not use the evidence from self-

evaluation activities well enough to rigorously challenge any underperformance in teaching or to improve the quality of teaching across the school.

Leaders are beginning to develop a culture of professional learning, with most staff taking part in training linked to school improvement priorities. For example, recent professional learning has led to improved teacher knowledge and practice in developing pupils' skills in the outdoor learning environment. However, overall, opportunities for staff to observe and share good practice within the school and across the region are limited. Senior leaders have not had sufficient time or targeted professional development to enable staff to sustain improvements across the school.

Leaders foster strong relationships with parents, who value the school's approach to welcome their views and concerns. Staff deal particularly well with vulnerable pupils and provide beneficial guidance and support for them and their families.

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

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