



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

**A report on**

**Bryn Bach County Primary School**

**Merthyr Road  
Tredegar  
NP22 3RX**

**Date of inspection: July 2023**

**by**

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

## About Bryn Bach County Primary School

Name of provider	Bryn Bach County Primary School
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	N/A
Number of pupils on roll	233
Pupils of statutory school age	171
Number in nursery classes	32
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%)	23.5%
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%)	18.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	15/05/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	05/01/2015
Start date of inspection	03/07/2023

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](https://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

Bryn Bach County Primary School is a caring and welcoming environment for all its staff, pupils and families. Nearly all pupils enjoy school and feel happy and safe. Staff ensure that the well-being of pupils is a high priority for all and, as a result, pupils feel valued and proud to be part of the school community.

Members of the new senior leadership team have begun to make improvements to the provision for pupils. They have a clear vision for the future of the school. In a short time, they have improved arrangements for the teaching of reading and strategies for supporting pupils' well-being.

Relationships between staff and pupils, and between each other, are positive and supportive. Most pupils have positive attitudes to school life. They behave well during lessons and when moving around the school. The school provides extra-curricular activities that develop and enhance a wide range of skills effectively and inspire pupils to take up new interests. These experiences develop pupils' life skills and well-being positively.

Overall, the teaching and the learning experiences provided for pupils are appropriate. Staff provide pupils with numerous opportunities to build on their knowledge and understanding. However, staff do not ensure that pupils develop their skills systematically or apply them purposefully, for example in writing.

Self-evaluation processes are appropriate and inform leaders of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders regularly review the school's work against its improvement priorities and use a wide range of information appropriately including data from pupil assessments, carrying out learning walks and scrutinising pupils' standards within their books. However, leaders' monitoring activity does not always pick up on important areas of teaching and learning that need improving. Examples include the way teachers plan for writing, Welsh and how feedback helps pupils to improve their work as they move through the school.

## Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement processes so that they impact more positively on the quality of teaching and learning
- R2 Improve standards of writing
- R3 Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills
- R4 Ensure that learning experiences meet all pupils needs and develop their skills systematically

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

A majority of pupils enter school with skills around those expected for their age. However, a minority of pupils often begin school demonstrating weaker social skills, such as sharing and co-operating. Many pupils make effective progress in the development of their skills over time, such as with their reading and mathematics. However, their progress in writing, Welsh and their digital skills, is not strong enough. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress towards their personal goals and targets. Pupils eligible for free school meals make progress in line with their peers.

In nursery, a majority of pupils speak simply and share a few opinions, such as their favourite ice-cream flavours. By Year 2, a majority of pupils listen to adults well, but still speak hesitantly and often respond to questions with short answers. By Year 6, many pupils are confident when speaking to each other and to adults. For example, they discuss in thoughtful detail how they will design a device to ensure an egg will not break when dropped from a height.

By Year 1, a majority of pupils read simple texts with confidence and understanding. They talk about their favourite books and demonstrate a love of reading. By Year 2, many pupils read a range of age-appropriate texts with increasing accuracy and use features, such as pictures, to understand the story. In Year 4, most pupils read fluently and accurately for their age and recall well what they have read. Many pupils in Year 6 read a range of texts, including information texts and online resources, confidently and accurately. They discuss what they read maturely, referring to key points in the text thoughtfully.

The youngest pupils start to show an understanding of different forms of writing, for example making marks to write in a card. Many Year 2 pupils begin to write at a suitable length and for different purposes, such as to express their thoughts on the NHS. In Year 4, many pupils explain their ideas in writing suitably. They develop a series of sentences to tell a story or explain an idea logically and begin to organise their writing using paragraphs. By Year 6, many pupils create a few engaging pieces of writing, such as sonnets. However, many older pupils use only basic sentences and simple punctuation accurately and do not use descriptive language confidently enough. Their spelling is generally weak, and work is too often poorly presented. Pupils write to a similar standard across the curriculum but have too few opportunities to write at length.

In reception, many pupils use a few simple Welsh words and phrases suitably, such as to greet others in the morning. By Year 2, many pupils use and respond to simple questions, such as those asking how they are. In Year 4, most pupils use a few simple sentences competently. However, their recall of most sentences they have practised in class is poor. By Year 6, many pupils answer the same simple questions in Welsh. However, throughout the school, most pupils' Welsh language skills are weak.

In reception, many pupils count well in their play activities, and recognise and continue repeating patterns correctly, for example using two colours on a peg board. By Year 2 many pupils use their number skills confidently. They recognise and identify the properties of simple shapes well and use mathematical language correctly. In Year 4, many pupils have useful number skills. They represent data using charts, and many transfer their mathematical skills to a variety of contexts. By Year 6, many pupils have a useful understanding of place value. They create simple charts and graphs and use these to evaluate information. However, pupils do not always apply their skills to a wide enough range of purposeful activities well enough.

As they progress through the school, most pupils develop strong digital skills. They regularly use tablet computers to support their wider learning, and this leads to most pupils being confident and fluent in their use. For instance, pupils in Year 1 independently log on and access apps that support their letter recognition and formation. In the older classes, they access a suitable range of programs to support and share their work across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 3 use online forms well to design questionnaires and pupils in Year 6 create engaging presentations to share their research about modern slavery. However, their understanding of spreadsheets, databases and coding is underdeveloped.

Many pupils demonstrate effective creative skills. In Year 6 many pupils use their creative and observational skills well to craft a painting of an area of the school in the style of Renoir. In Year 4 many pupils construct high quality 'Green Man' sculptures in the forest school area using a range of natural resources.

Many pupils have strong physical skills. For example, in reception, pupils build a large cage for a giraffe from plastic building apparatus skilfully. They demonstrate good physical skills when balancing carefully on logs or creating bridges to cross gaps. In physical education sessions, many pupils balance on body parts skilfully.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and participate in school life enthusiastically. They feel safe and secure and know who to talk to if they need help or support.

Most pupils show compassion and understand each other's needs. They explain how they help others in lessons and around the school. Most pupils know the purpose of class rules and sanctions. They speak positively about the house point system and the rewards given at the end of each week. Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and at lunch and break times. However, a few younger pupils are still developing appropriate social skills when interacting with their peers during lessons, and do not always behave appropriately towards each other.

Many pupils are capable learners and have positive attitudes towards learning. They quickly settle to lessons, follow the routines of the classroom and are ready to learn. Where pupils receive helpful feedback on their work, they make simple changes that begin to improve its quality. Many pupils work collaboratively in lessons. For example, in Year 3, pupils work together to plan a drama performance retelling the story of Rama and Sita. They overcome difficulties by discussing and compromising to ensure that all are happy with the roles given.

Nearly all pupils begin to develop into ethical citizens. For example, Year 6 pupils study Greta Thunberg, and through this research have a good understanding of how they as individuals can impact the world in which they live. Many pupils know the importance of recycling and its effect on the environment. For example, they explain how recycling paper and milk cartons reduces the pressure on the Earth's resources. Many pupils have a good understanding of the rights of a child and try to ensure that their peers have equal opportunities during the school day. Many pupils successfully develop entrepreneurial skills during 'Enterprise Week'. For example, they plan how they can make money during the summer fair for a national charity.

When given the opportunity, many pupils develop their leadership skills well. Through groups such as the 'Tech Team', School Council and Criw cymraeg, they have a positive impact on school life. For example, the Criw Cymraeg promote a Welsh personality of the month, and this helps other pupils to understand the impact of Welsh people on the world stage.

Many pupils see the benefit of exercise and healthy eating on their general well-being and identify their time in the forest school area as one that promotes calmness and relaxation. Across the school, many pupils are ambitious and confident in their learning and show resilience when faced with a challenge. For example, when pupils in Year 3 produce an online form to make a survey on a French artist, they discuss the issues involved, solve problems of inputting a picture into the form and are supported well by the 'Tech Team' who encourage and guide their peers.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school's curriculum focuses on developing pupils' learning as they move through the school. Each term, the school focuses learning in different themes that give pupils a broad range of experiences across all of the areas of learning. For example, pupils learn about the plight of the people in Ukraine in the topic 'where is the love'.

Pupils have a useful say in what they learn, and this helps to engage them in their topics successfully. For example, in the theme 'a bit of a do', pupils guide the topic towards learning about cooking and foods from around the world. However, staff do not ensure that pupils' learning builds systematically across the school and the curriculum tries to cover too many different learning experiences each term. As a result, pupils do not always sufficiently embed their knowledge and skills as they move through the school. In a few instances, teachers miss out important areas of the curriculum, such as religion, values and ethics (RVE), and provide too few opportunities for pupils to develop their English writing and Welsh oracy skills.

In the main, the school's curriculum provides pupils with appropriate opportunities to develop their numeracy, literacy and digital skills. The school has effective provision

to help pupils to develop their reading skills, including through a broad range of interesting texts and dedicated reading skills sessions. As a result, many pupils develop strong reading skills. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum are too inconsistent. There are a purposeful range of mathematics sessions that give pupils a strong numerical understanding, but too few opportunities for pupils to apply these skills to real-life learning.

Throughout the school, teachers use a 'Bubbles and Missions' approach to learning. Many adult-led sessions provide pupils with suitable learning opportunities. However, 'missions' are often low-level tasks that do not help pupils to make strong enough progress and deepen their understanding. In the nursery and reception classes, pupils have plentiful opportunities to lead their learning and to learn outside. However, as a result of the organisation of the day a minority of pupils do not engage appropriately, and they spend too little time learning purposefully. In addition, teachers plan insufficient opportunities for pupils in the older year groups to learn in the outdoors, particularly in Year 1 and Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, teachers and support staff direct pupils' learning too closely, and the over-use of worksheets prevents pupils from working with enough independence.

Pupils have a useful range of opportunities to learn about the history and experiences of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. For instance, pupils study global issues, such as the slave trade and focus on the experiences of individuals, such as Walter Tull, the first Black officer in World War One. There are appropriate opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to develop a suitable understanding of the history and culture of Wales. For example, pupils study the life of the local politician, Aneurin Bevan and work with local artists to create tiles to celebrate the NHS.

In many sessions, teachers identify clear learning objectives and success criteria. They are beginning to involve pupils in setting their own success criteria and use modelled examples well to help pupils understand what they need to do for their work to be successful.

In a minority of sessions, teachers monitor pupils' learning successfully as the lesson progresses. They identify misconceptions or errors and provide pupils with useful verbal feedback that enables them to improve their learning. However, this does not happen consistently enough, and often pupils continue with their misconceptions and repeat the same errors. In many cases, teachers' written feedback is not helpful enough to allow pupils to understand how and where they need to make improvements to their work.

Support staff generally work well alongside classroom practitioners. They provide well-tailored support and interventions for pupils who find the work difficult or have other additional needs. A majority of support staff in classes ask well-chosen questions, for example to support pupils to think more deeply about what they are doing. However, a minority of support staff do not always extend and deepen pupils' understanding effectively enough.

While teachers are beginning to develop an overview of how well pupils are progressing in their learning over time, they do not always use on going assessment effectively enough to ensure that teaching provides sufficient challenge for all pupils.

## Care, support and guidance

Provision for most pupils' personal development is good. The school supports nearly all pupils' emotional, health and social needs well. The provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is a strength of the school and the additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) works effectively with staff across the school to support the needs of pupils.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with additional learning needs well through a range of monitoring and assessment activities. Teachers successfully match the needs of pupils to worthwhile targets that lead into purposeful interventions to support their literacy and emotional development. As a result, most pupils with ALN make good progress in the development of their literacy, numeracy and social skills. Staff have built very good relationships with the pupils they work with.

Staff write and review one-page profiles with the pupil and their parents or carers, and this helps to ensure that pupils' needs are mapped correctly. Staff work effectively with a range of external agencies, such as the educational psychologist and mental health teams to support pupils and their families well.

Staff provide good support for pupils as they join the nursery class. Where pupils have specific needs, staff ensure beneficial additional support prior to the pupil joining. This ensures that most pupils settle well.

Similarly, the school works well with the local high school to support pupils with specific needs as they move from Year 6 to Year 7. For example, staff from the primary school host meetings between pupils, their families and high school staff to discuss pupils' one-page profiles and how the high school can build on the support provided by the primary.

The school ensures that pupils learn important facts about their bodies as they grow older and how to keep themselves healthy and safe. However, the school does not fully address the requirements of the relationships and sexuality education (RSE) curriculum, particularly for older pupils.

The school provides good opportunities for many pupils to use their imagination and be creative, for example, many pupils performed in the national singing group, 'Young Voices'. The school also ensures suitable opportunities for pupils to access a range of sports both competitive and non-competitive. For example, pupils compete in the cluster sporting events in rugby, netball and football.

The school promotes pupils' rights successfully through weekly collective worship. Pupils talk confidently about what is important to them in life and how relaxing and reflecting on activities can lead to a positive mental state. The local vicar visits the school to support the pupils in their spiritual development help them to reflect and value stories from the bible.

The school provides pupils with opportunities to become active citizens of the school through a variety of pupil leadership groups. Many pupils have identified aspirations for the future and older pupils have considered what skills they will need to meet their goals, for example developing artistic skills to become a fashion designer.



Leaders embed a culture of purposeful safeguarding processes among all staff and these practices are an integral part of their daily responsibilities. As a result, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. The school has robust procedures for monitoring and tracking attendance, which have a positive effect on the attendance of nearly all pupils across the school.

## **Leadership and management**

Senior leaders have worked effectively with staff, pupils, families and governors to establish a clear vision for the school. All staff work together to encourage pupils to be responsible and respectful and, as a result, behaviour is good and pupils feel safe. School leaders' relationships with parents and carers are effective. This has a positive impact on pupils' well-being.

Senior leaders provide worthwhile and successful opportunities for staff to develop their leadership skills. Nearly all staff take on a variety of roles and these are beginning to have an impact on the curriculum. Leaders encourage all staff to engage in professional learning that relates to the school's improvement priorities and the needs of individuals. Staff performance targets link clearly to important elements of the school improvement plan, for example pupils' well-being, the development of their reading skills and the use of research to improve provision. Leaders tailor performance management priorities well to staff's responsibilities and interests. Overall, leaders are developing a valuable culture of professional learning in the school.

Self-evaluation processes are appropriate and suitably inform leaders of many of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders use a wide range of information appropriately to inform their evaluations, including data from pupil assessments, carrying out learning walks and scrutinising pupils' standards within their books. For example, the school has identified writing and the development of skills as priorities for next year. However, self-evaluation processes are not always sharp enough, for instance in identifying shortcomings in the quality of teaching and learning.

The school uses specific grant funding effectively to ensure beneficial support for identified pupils. For example, leaders use the pupil development grant well to provide a range of intervention strategies to support pupils to improve their well-being, and literacy and numeracy skills.

The school addresses a majority of national and local priorities suitably. It has been particularly successful in implementing ALN reform. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual learning goals. The school's work on the Curriculum for Wales is developing appropriately. However, the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills and the provision for the Welsh language are underdeveloped.

Members of the governing body know the school well and have a wide skill set that leaders within the school utilise effectively. They visit the school regularly, taking part in a variety of activities including learning walks, book looks, school assemblies and meetings with all staff.

Leaders have a sound understanding of their responsibilities in relation to keeping pupils safe and have established a strong safeguarding culture in the school. In most cases, governors make suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking amongst pupils. However, they allow pupils to bring drinks other than water into school to drink during the day.

## 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](http://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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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