



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

A report on

Penygelli Primary

**Castle Road
Coedpoeth
LL11 3LS**

Date of inspection: May 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Penygelli Primary

Name of provider	Penygelli Primary
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	293
Pupils of statutory school age	234
Number in nursery classes	30
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%)	30.7%
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%)	15.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.6%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	14/11/2014
Start date of inspection	09/05/2023
*	

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

Penygelli Primary School provides a warm, caring environment for pupils. Pupils, staff and the community are proud of the school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for by their teachers with whom they have strong working relationships. Overall, pupils' behaviour is excellent and they treat one another and adults with respect.

Members of the recently formed interim leadership team have re-established a positive culture across the school community. The interim headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, is highly visible and works well with other staff towards fulfilling their vision to provide a caring, thoughtful, happy and secure environment for pupils. They have brought staff together through a challenging time and re-established a vision for wellbeing and belonging across the school community.

During their time at school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make suitable progress from their starting points. Most develop their oracy, reading, physical and creative skills well, but do not make as much progress in developing their writing and numeracy skills.

The interim leadership team has recently established effective systems to gain a greater understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, over time, the school's evaluation and improvement processes have not been effective enough in securing improvements to important aspects of teaching and learning.

The partnership between the school and parents is a strength, placing the school in the heart of the community. There is a sense of pride in being associated with the school and parents value the positive role it plays in developing their children's enthusiasm for learning.

Recommendations

- R1 Further develop the curriculum to ensure that it supports the progressive development of pupils' skills, particularly writing and numeracy, as they move through the school
- R2 Improve the aspects of teaching and learning experiences identified in the report as being less effective
- R3 Sharpen self-evaluation and school improvement processes to focus closely on bringing about improvements to teaching and learning

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

Most pupils enter the school with skills at a stage of development at, or slightly below, those expected for their age. As pupils move through the school, many make suitable progress in their learning overall. In general, however, older pupils, particularly the more able, do not always make good enough progress. Pupils with additional learning needs make strong progress against their targets.

When they start school, many pupils settle in quickly. They begin to listen well to adults and follow instructions carefully. As pupils move through the school, they develop their oracy skills purposefully. Nearly all communicate confidently with adults and other children and talk enthusiastically about their school and their learning. In a few year groups, pupils have started to broaden their communication skills by learning basic British Sign Language.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills. Across the school, they develop an enjoyment of reading and respond confidently to texts during group reading sessions. Most pupils in the nursery class listen to a story with interest, and a few choose their favourite books, turning the pages and talking about the pictures confidently. In the reception class, many pupils have a suitable understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds and how sounds combine to form words. By Year 2, most pupils show enthusiasm for reading. Older pupils discuss books purposefully and share their reasons for choosing a style of book confidently. They use punctuation effectively to shape their reading, for instance to change their tone when a character is speaking. They infer the meaning of words and make suitable predictions about what they think might happen next in the story and why. Nearly all pupils talk positively about opportunities to develop their reading skills, such as the recently introduced book club.

Most pupils make suitable progress in developing their writing skills. Young pupils begin to use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them read and write familiar words, such as their names. However, a minority of pupils do not have secure enough phonological skills and as a result the accuracy of spelling is too variable. Older pupils write in a range of genres and for a variety of interesting purposes. For example, pupils in Year 5 create diary entries from the point of view of famous historical figures such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. However, older pupils do not write creatively very often. Across the school and the ability ranges, pupils tend to rely too heavily on scaffolds to support their writing.

Throughout the school, many pupils develop satisfactory number skills. In nursery, they count and order numbers accurately 10. They transfer their maths skills to their play activities, for example when counting and sorting marbles into colours during outdoor learning. By Year 2, many pupils develop simple calculation skills and use numbers to 100 confidently. Most older pupils develop sound methods of calculation and apply these to problem-solving activities. For example, pupils in Year 6 apply Napier's Bones method to multiply two two-digit numbers confidently. However, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum well enough.

Most pupils make appropriate use of digital technology to support and present their learning. Younger pupils use tablet devices, for example to play numeracy games to support their learning when recognising numbers. Older pupils access saved files appropriately, work well with a range of apps and search engines to find and present information and write codes successfully. By Year 6, pupils use a range of programmes independently and with increasing confidence. For example, Year 5 pupils create websites with hyperlinked pages related to a class project on Cardiff.

Nearly all pupils make good progress in speaking Welsh and enjoy learning the language. They participate actively in regular Helpwr Heddiw sessions, using familiar patterns and vocabulary confidently to play a range of games. Across the school, many pupils' Welsh speaking and listening skills are consistently good. Most younger pupils instigate and respond to simple questions and instructions effectively. Many older pupils hold more detailed conversations independently, using the past tense confidently. They read and write a range of materials based on a variety of learned patterns.

Across the school, nearly all pupils develop their physical skills well. For example, the youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills appropriately and start to form letters correctly. Many pupils become increasingly independent in their learning. For example, pupils in nursery decided to create a dirt racetrack with toy cars before washing them with toothbrushes at the carwash. However, overall pupils' independent learning skills such as creative thinking and problem solving do not always develop well enough. In most instances, this is because tasks are overly structured by adults. Pupils often spend too much time engaged in relatively low-level activities in their 'missions' and these do not support them to use their existing skills at the level of which they are capable.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel well supported by teachers and support staff. They know that staff listen to their views and understand who they can turn to for help and guidance. As a result, almost all pupils feel safe, valued, and proud to be a part of Ysgol Penygelli.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They know the school's expectations for behaviour and understand the rewards and consequences for good or poor behaviour. They listen well in class, show respect for adults and kindness towards their friends. They move carefully and quickly to their learning activities and work well together, showing consideration for the ideas of others.

Most pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. Overall, they engage well with learning tasks and sustain concentration, often showing determination to complete their work. Pupils engage enthusiastically with their class topics and, when given the opportunity, enjoy challenging themselves to apply their skills in unfamiliar contexts to solve problems. For example, pupils from Year 5 and 6 work together thoughtfully to complete a rescue mission as part of their outdoor learning.

Many pupils are beginning to develop some useful strategies to help them overcome difficulty. For example, they explain how to use the 'Brain, Buddy, Boss' strategy, known as the 'three B's', to move their learning forward when they get stuck. Most pupils respond well to verbal feedback during lessons and use it to improve their work. The majority of pupils are beginning to use written feedback from teachers and classmates to help them improve their work. However, pupils do not always clearly understand what they need to do next to further improve their learning.

Older pupils develop a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, and many are developing as ethical, well-informed individuals who value the world they live in. Pupils are keen to take care of their learning environments and understand the difference they can make. For example, older pupils explain how to reuse and recycle materials to minimise their impact on the environment.

Pupils have good opportunities to take part in pupil groups such as the Criw Cymraeg, the Eco Committee and School Council. Pupils in these groups are well respected by their classmates and have a strong impact on improving the school. For example, pupils in the Criw Cymraeg help improve attitudes to using the Welsh language across the school by leading regular assemblies that encourage pupils to love living in Wales and have fun using the language.

Most pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. They understand the importance of eating a healthy, balanced diet. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 design a balanced diet for an athlete and explain why some food groups such as sugars can lead to ill health if overindulged. Pupils participate enthusiastically in activities that keep their bodies healthy, including regular swimming lessons, and many take good advantage of the wide range of after school clubs including football, netball and dance.

Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. They know the importance of not sharing personal information, and older pupils explain the potential dangers of social media and how to report concerns, for example to their parents or a responsible adult.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has developed a clear vision for its curriculum in line with the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales. Teachers use the locality thoughtfully to enhance the curriculum and develop a range of learning activities and experiences that improve pupils' understanding of the local area and their sense of belonging to the community, known as Cynefin. Nearly all teachers offer opportunities for pupils to contribute ideas at the beginning of each new topic. For example, older pupils influenced a project on environmental issues.

The curriculum offers a broad range of learning experiences that engage nearly all pupils appropriately. Staff plan suitably for pupils to develop their literacy skills and provide good opportunities for older pupils in particular to develop their digital skills. The school provides an interesting range of opportunities for pupils to develop language skills, including Welsh across the school and French and British Sign Language in Years 5 and 6. However, planning for extended writing and numeracy is not progressive across the school.

Nearly all teachers plan a broad range of stimulating learning activities. They work well together to share expertise and create a curriculum that provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their curiosity of the world around them. However, teachers do not always have a clear understanding of the skills and knowledge they want pupils to develop during these learning experiences. As a result, opportunities for learning, particularly independent tasks, often lack challenge and pupils do not apply their skills to a high enough level or make enough progress. The school's provision for the developing pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum does not always ensure that teaching builds on pupils' previous learning or secures progression particularly when older pupils are working independently.

Provision in the school's nursery class matches the principles of foundation learning well. Pupils have valuable opportunities to learn through play and exploration and receive effective support from adults. However, as they move on, opportunities for them to lead their own learning decrease. They regularly engage in 'missions' and occasionally, these planned activities support them to apply their skills well, for example when making mazes for other pupils to navigate. From Year 3 to 6, mission activities provide opportunities for pupils to work independently. However, too often, teachers plan these activities without focusing on the skills, knowledge or understanding they expect pupils to develop. Pupils spend too much time on low-level activities that do not challenge them well enough.

Pupils benefit from the school's extensive outdoor environment. Staff plan appropriate learning opportunities for pupils to explore, practise and enhance their skills. For example, pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 use their measuring skills accurately to build a habitat to attract bees to the school garden. Forest school provision contributes effectively to the development of pupils' problem-solving and physical skills, as well as their well-being. Staff use Hagrid's Hut learning area to plan exciting sustainability and healthy eating lessons.

All staff manage pupils' behaviour well and treat them with kindness and respect. Teachers and support staff work effectively to support pupils' well-being and individuals who require extra support. This helps nearly all pupils to behave well in school and gives them the confidence to share their ideas, ask questions and contribute readily to class discussions.

Most teachers and support staff use questioning well to challenge pupils' thinking, identify misconceptions and move their learning forward. They give clear instructions that support pupils to understand what they need to do to complete their tasks successfully. However, in a few instances, staff are too keen to provide support and over scaffold pupils' learning. As a result, pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to develop work that is original and reflects their own thinking.

Staff are beginning to develop their understanding of effective assessment that moves learning forwards. Overall, however, feedback does not identify pupils' next steps clearly enough and pupils do not have regular enough opportunities to improve the quality of their work. This means that pupils do not always make enough progress over time, for example when writing creatively or at length across the curriculum.

Care, support and guidance

Provision for pupils' care, support and guidance, particularly those with additional learning needs, is strong. Leaders work effectively with staff to ensure a clear focus on pupils' well-being and they provide strong support for pupils who need additional help.

Led by the additional learning needs co-ordinator, the school has made strong progress towards additional learning needs reform. Leaders ensure that teachers and support staff understand their roles and responsibilities. For example, staff work alongside pupils and their parents to create one-page profiles to support a shared understanding of pupils' needs.

The additional learning needs co-ordinator has developed comprehensive systems to identify pupils who may require additional support in aspects of their learning. She collaborates effectively with staff to improve provision for identified pupils across the school. Leaders allocate support thoughtfully and monitor its impact on the progress pupils make. A strong team of teaching assistants support classroom learning skilfully and deliver a good range of intervention groups, for example to improve pupils' reading skills and support their emotional well-being.

Leaders and staff work well together to support pupils' emotional well-being. They have excellent working relationships with pupils and deal with issues quickly and sensitively. Staff build in opportunities to monitor how pupils feel and support them to regulate their own emotions so that they are ready to learn. Well-trained staff deliver interventions to pupils who need further support. This improves their behaviour at school and at home and parents appreciate this support.

The school ensures that pupils have good opportunities to become active citizens and have an impact in their local community. For example, pupil voice groups organise fund raising events to support those in need and make blankets for the local Special Baby Care unit. The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to share their ideas for improving the school environment, including the provision of a 'fidget box' to help pupils develop strategies to improve their focus in lessons.

Staff encourage pupils to develop a love of the outdoors and appreciation for the locality. They plan regular opportunities for outdoor learning in the forest school as well as frequent visits to local parks and woodlands. Pupils are offered a variety of enrichment activities, including traditional Welsh music and dancing, to help them to understand the culture and heritage of Wales and their place in it.

There are suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about cultural diversity. For example, pupils create empathetic writing based on the life of Rosa Parks and they discuss more difficult issues such as racism in modern society. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of major religions of the world

and for Year 6 pupils to reflect upon their own codes for living and their responses to age-appropriate moral dilemmas.

The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to engage with a wide range of physical activities as part of the curriculum. Pupils attend swimming lessons regularly and take part in a range of school sports competitions. The curriculum is enhanced by visitors to the school, such as players from Wrexham football club, who work with pupils to develop their problem-solving skills in the outdoors and support their learning in the classroom.

A wide range of extra-curricular clubs broaden pupils' experiences and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop a range of skills and pursue new interests. For example, pupils take part in drama activities, learn how to speak French, develop their first aid skills and develop their problem-solving skills using construction materials. In addition, pupils learn about the world of work, for example by comparing salaries or taking part in a 'career discovery week' where they look at a range of jobs, including those related to technology or archaeology.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that there are robust policies and procedures in place, which all staff follow to ensure the safety of learners and staff. The school curriculum supports pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

The school's procedures for monitoring attendance are effective. There is suitable communication with parents and a clear emphasis on the importance of attending school regularly. Staff work with the Education Welfare Officer to provide additional support for families.

Leadership and management

The school currently has interim leadership arrangements. In the very short time that these arrangements have been in place, they have brought much needed stability to the school community.

The interim headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff work well together towards fulfilling their vision to provide a caring, thoughtful, happy and secure environment for pupils. They have brought a team together through a challenging time and re-established a vision for wellbeing and belonging across the school community. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' happiness and well-being. They provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for all. Leaders establish and maintain a positive safeguarding culture.

Overall, the interim leadership team has an accurate picture of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement. They are beginning to undertake a range of appropriate monitoring activities, such as scrutiny of pupils' work, learning walks and listening to learners. However, leaders do not always evaluate the difference that teaching and learning experiences make to pupils' progress. Arrangements to evaluate teaching lack rigour and do not identify instances of ineffective teaching that limit pupils' progress and engagement in learning. Overall, leaders and staff do not have high enough expectations for pupil progress.

Leaders encourage staff to engage with professional learning to improve their skills and effectiveness in supporting pupils. Staff use their performance management appropriately to identify suitable activities to support their personal development as well as school improvement activity. Leaders are beginning to consider the links between school development and professional learning. For example, to support staff with the teaching of Welsh, the school developed a package of professional learning alongside the region. However, professional learning and school improvement are not always aligned well enough, and leaders do not robustly monitor the impact of professional learning on the effectiveness of teaching and on pupils' progress well enough. Opportunities for staff across the school to develop their leadership skills are at a very early stage of development.

There have been significant changes in the membership of the governing body recently. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and know the school and locality well. They are beginning to develop their roles and are learning about how they can best support the school as a critical friend. They have started to consider how effective learning is in the school, for example by joining leaders in self-evaluation activities. Newly established link governors are beginning to work alongside school staff to evaluate the provision in key areas. For example, a link governor is joining the additional learning needs co-ordinator to monitor the impact of the school's support for pupils with additional learning needs. Governors keep suitable oversight of healthy eating and drinking and have a secure understanding of their role in safeguarding.

Generally, leaders manage the school's budget and pupil development grant well. Leaders, including governors, monitor expenditure closely and make suitable adjustments to how they allocate funding. They produce costed plans to improve the learning environment. However, funding allocation linked to improve the school priorities is less established.

The partnership between the school and parents is a strength, bringing the school to the heart of the community. The school welcomes parents and families at any time and communicates effectively with parents to ensure that they are aware of day-to-day activities. A recently introduced app has improved communication between school and home, allowing parents access information on their children's day at school. Parents speak highly of the commitment leaders and staff show in supporting them and their children's learning.

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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