



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

A report on

Y Bont Faen Primary School

**Borough Close
Cowbridge
CF71 7BN**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Y Bont Faen Primary School

Name of provider	Y Bontfaen Primary
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	271
Pupils of statutory school age	188
Number in nursery classes	53
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%)	1.8%
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%)	6.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	12/06/2023

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

Staff at Y Bont Faen Primary School create a welcoming and inclusive community where pupils relish learning. Overall, the school is effective in achieving its aims. Many pupils develop creativity, independence, and ambition successfully. Pupils are respectful, enthusiastic, and happy. They benefit greatly from the school's effective approach to developing thinking skills, allowing them to make decisions, organise their learning and contribute effectively to the curriculum.

The school forms strong partnerships with parents and the wider local community. Parents feel included and informed and appreciate the support they receive. Local charities and businesses work in partnership with the school to provide experiences that enrich the curriculum and support well-being. Pupils develop a sense of their own identity and an understanding of their locality, and they begin to understand how their lives compare with those of others across the world.

During their time in school, nearly all pupils make good progress in most areas of their learning. They develop a secure understanding of what, how and why they learn, and relate the skills and knowledge they gain to their aspirations. From an early age, pupils begin to reflect on their learning, suggesting ways that they and others could improve their work. Older pupils often develop a sophisticated understanding of their next steps in learning, using questioning and responding to teachers' feedback to make improvements.

Throughout the school, staff consider pupils' individual needs carefully and provide effective support. Staff develop positive, supportive working relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils respond well to challenge and develop resilience. They feel safe and listened to and know how to seek advice when needed. The school's work on creativity and thinking provides pupils with extensive opportunities to be innovative, find solutions and use their imagination. Pupils develop their understanding of the environment well. They enjoy their outdoor learning and physical activities. Although they understand the impact of diet on their bodies, they do not always make appropriate snack choices.

Senior leaders encourage nearly all staff to take a lead on aspects of school improvement. Staff work collaboratively to bring about change in important areas of the school's work, ensuring consistency in teaching and in support for pupils.

Recommendations

R1 Improve arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to developing creativity through its curriculum, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

Nearly all pupils enter the school in reception or nursery class with communication skills that are at or above that expected for their age. During their time in school, nearly all pupils make at least suitable progress in developing their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills and many make strong progress. They recall prior learning well and apply that knowledge successfully to new contexts.

Most pupils engage well in conversation with each other and with adults. They express their ideas clearly. Older pupils often speak eloquently using complex vocabulary and sophisticated language with a high level of confidence, for example when performing plays based on the work of Shakespeare. Pupils in Year 3 explain the concept of food chains clearly, giving accurate definitions of producers, predators, and prey. Nearly all pupils listen attentively and actively. They take part enthusiastically in class discussion and contribute maturely, for example when considering how human rights can be met.

From an early age, most pupils develop their knowledge of letters and sounds well. In Years 1 and 2 they swiftly develop their reading skills and use a good range of strategies when tackling unfamiliar words. Older pupils identify key information from texts and use this information to summarise and infer meaning. They read well, altering their tone of voice to convey meaning. By Year 6, most pupils read with confidence and understanding, for example when describing what happens to characters in a book they are sharing. They read with pace and accuracy and enjoy reading a wide variety of books.

Pupils develop secure writing skills from an early age. They apply these skills successfully across the curriculum. By Year 1, pupils write short sentences, for example to describe their holiday or to ask local residents to protect hedgehogs. Pupils from Year 2 upwards make strong progress and write with increasing accuracy. They write for a broad range of audiences and purposes. They write effective poems, letters, advertisements, scripts and stories linked to their class inquiries. By Year 6, most pupils write freely with a high level of creativity, for example when producing sophisticated innovations of a Welsh legend. However, pupils do not always take enough care with their handwriting.

Overall, pupils make good progress in developing Welsh language skills. They use Welsh confidently to greet and ask visitors questions and to answer questions about

where they live and who they live with. They respond well to Welsh instructions from teachers. By Year 6, many develop their writing successfully, constructing simple sentences and paragraphs, for example to describe the countries they travel to. Many read with suitable pronunciation when reading from Welsh texts.

Pupils' mathematical skills develop well during their time in school. Younger pupils investigate capacity independently, finding ways to compare half full and a quarter full. They use a range of receptacles, filling them to match the fraction represented. Most pupils use the four rules of number confidently, for example when adding and subtracting using the column method. They collect data and draw bar charts suitably, when investigating substances that dissolve. Most pupils apply their numeracy skills adeptly across other areas of the curriculum, such as when they analyse the number of visitors to Wales's natural areas of beauty.

Pupils' digital skills develop successfully as they move through the school. They refine these skills when producing databases, spreadsheets and presentations. Pupils in Year 5 create a database on planets and consequently design a card game. Pupils begin to use control to program robots from a young age and progress to more advanced coding by Year 6. Most pupils are proficient at producing videos and manipulating digital images to gather evidence of their work.

Nearly all pupils develop their thinking skills successfully. They work well independently and make useful decisions about their learning. Most pupils are resilient learners who apply problem-solving strategies confidently. Pupils in Year 2 demonstrate these skills when creating identification charts to help identify the range of bugs they find in the outdoor area, and when constructing a tent without instructions.

A notable feature of the school is how well pupils of all ages develop their creative skills. Through the many opportunities offered, pupils develop strong creative skills to produce imaginative work. For example, pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 produce engaging stories, poems, and songs. Pupils across the school display their colourful artwork inspired by Welsh artists. Year 3 pupils collaborate effectively when choreographing and performing dance routines. Most pupils use their imagination when playing and using the outdoors. They develop their physical skills well over time. The youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills by handling live quail delicately and show dexterity in milking an imitation cow. Older pupils succeed in setting up intricate scientific experiments and show balance and poise, for example when dancing, or when riding their bikes on the school's mountain bike track.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Staff create warm and nurturing working relationships with pupils. As a result, all pupils feel happy and valued. This is a strength of the school.

Staff ensure that pupils have access to a range of effective programmes that support them with their well-being. The care and respect they receive are reflected in their own attitudes, relationships and behaviour.

Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school is exceptional. They create and follow charters to ensure that everyone can learn without disruption. Nearly all

pupils are enthusiastic about learning. They show great interest in their learning experiences and are proud of their work. From an early age, pupils begin to show a good level of independence and resilience. They are not hindered by a fear of failure, embracing opportunities to move their learning forward. For example, pupils in Year 1 explain how making mistakes helps them learn, and pupils in Year 4 show determination when solving a human sudoku.

Across the school, pupils regularly enjoy learning outdoors, finding new ways to practise and embed their skills. They make the most of their forest school sessions and appreciate opportunities to care for animals and plants. Pupils throughout the school are enthusiastic when learning new languages such as Welsh, French and sign language. Pupils in nursery listen and respond well to Welsh instructions, and pupils in Year 4 enjoy developing their French vocabulary when playing games.

Most pupils develop aspirations for future careers and identify the skills they are learning that will help them to achieve their ambitions. They feel their work on thinking skills, for example, supports them to plan and organise their thoughts as they learn. They analyse evidence, form conclusions, and set appropriate actions during their inquiries.

Pupils respond well to verbal feedback, and from a young age begin to take responsibility for their own learning. They use success criteria purposefully to identify and understand what they need to do to improve their work. Older pupils reflect on their learning, asking and answering questions that probe knowledge further. They often make sophisticated comments on their own and others' work, suggesting ways they can improve. They focus well when working independently, and collaborate effectively during paired and group work, sharing ideas and clarifying their understanding. Pupils contribute to their learning purposefully. They suggest ideas for developing their curriculum, their inquiries, and their learning experiences.

Nearly all pupils enjoy opportunities to be active. For example, they play cricket at playtimes and refine their athletics skills in readiness for sports day. They participate enthusiastically and collaborate well in dance sessions. Most pupils develop a sound understanding of how to protect themselves online. They recognise the need to keep personal information safe and to use trusted websites when browsing. Many understand the importance of healthy eating, and the impact of diet on the body and brain. However, they do not always make appropriately healthy choices at breaktimes.

All pupils from Years 3 to 6 make valuable contributions to school improvement through their leadership roles. The school's Digital Council, for example, promotes online safety through whole-school assemblies. The School Council influences the school's safeguarding culture and promotes the actions that keep pupils safe. The school's work on human rights ensures that most pupils develop a secure understanding of their own rights as a child and those of others. For example, pupils raise funds to support local charities, and to improve the lives of vulnerable children in Zambia.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum focuses on pupils' needs and interests well. Staff have approached the implementation of Curriculum for Wales thoughtfully through a series of inquiry-based topics. Teachers plan and resource a wide range of stimulating experiences that foster creative approaches to learning and encourage collaboration. This includes valuable opportunities for play and a varied choice of activities.

The outdoor learning environment is used exceptionally well to provide a wide range of learning experiences that link to the planned curriculum. For example, pupils collect apples for Rosh Hashanah, measure tree heights with a clinometer and compose poetry inspired by nature. The curriculum is enriched by educational visits and visitors who provide authentic contexts for learning. Pupils recently benefited from a visit to the nearby Physic Garden to create botanical drawings.

Teachers effectively plan learning experiences that support pupils to transfer their knowledge and skills to other areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils in nursery explore language when discovering the characteristics of set and runny honey. Pupils in Year 1 develop their knowledge of fractions when baking hedgehog biscuits and older pupils explore digital applications when producing videos about the places in the world they plan to visit.

The school's curriculum includes many opportunities for pupils to learn about the history and culture of Wales. They find out about Welsh artists and musicians and investigate the history of their local area. Teachers plan purposeful learning experiences linked to the local community, such as evaluating the accessibility of the town for wheelchair users. They improve pupils' understanding of equity suitably and celebrate diversity within the local community.

The school's extra-curricular provision is extensive. Staff run a wide range of clubs and activities that allow pupils to further develop their skills and knowledge. These include an environmental club, choir, multi-sports club, and board games. In addition, the school arranges beneficial residential experiences for all pupils in Years 4 to 6 that enable them to further develop their problem-solving skills and resilience.

The school works well in partnership with others to enrich learning. Its work with creative practitioners allows pupils to participate in stimulating projects that enhance their creativity. As a result, many pupils produce high quality work in art, dance, and writing. Regular visits from members of voluntary organisations help pupils to gain valuable experience in microfinancing and ethics. Pupils apply the skills they learn purposefully to benefit people in other countries.

All teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Together with support staff, they build strong and respectful working relationships with pupils. These positive relationships contribute to the school's purposeful, busy, and motivating ethos.

Teachers succeed in engaging pupils' interest well so that they focus successfully on their tasks. They include pupils in planning what, and often how they learn. They make excellent use of resources, including digital devices and outdoor areas, to support pupils' learning. Teachers know pupils well and plan effectively to meet their individual needs. Learning support assistants provide valuable support for pupils'

learning throughout the school. They work extremely closely with teachers to ensure a consistent approach.

Teachers provide detailed explanations and clear instructions when introducing new concepts that ensure pupils understand the expectation. They plan plentiful opportunities for pupils to build on their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills systematically, ensuring that they make progress across the curriculum. Teachers are highly effective in developing pupils' creativity and thinking. Throughout the school, they provide pupils with valuable opportunities to express their views and ideas in a variety of ways. Teachers and learning support assistants provide extensive opportunities for younger pupils to use their imagination in the inviting outdoor areas, for example in their farm to fork inquiries.

During lessons, all teachers provide useful feedback to help pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Nearly all teachers use questioning skilfully to challenge pupils to build on prior learning, check their understanding and encourage them to extend their thinking independently as well as in groups and pairs.

Teachers plan and provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to assess and reflect on their own work increasingly effectively as they move through the school. They allow pupils to support each other productively in pairs and groups. This develops pupils' resilience and confidence to learn from their mistakes and from others.

Care, support and guidance

Y Bont Faen Primary School is an inclusive community where well-being is a priority. Together with pupils and parents, staff build positive relationships across the school. As a result, families feel well-informed and fully involved in the life of the school. Pupils thrive and feel their contributions are listened to. This is a strength of the school.

Across the school, staff create an engaging learning environment. Indoor areas are bright and airy and outdoor areas are thoughtful and imaginative. Staff provide a wide range of interesting and authentic stimuli that enable pupils to be curious and explore their learning independently. They promote positive behaviour and encourage attributes such as respect, empathy, and co-operation consistently.

The school's shared vision for high expectation and aspiration motivates pupils to take responsibility for their learning. As a result, they develop well as resilient, confident learners.

Teachers gather pupils' suggestions about what and how they would like to learn. Pupils in Year 1 suggest ways to make their school grounds hedgehog friendly and consider how to help gardeners deal with slugs. Older pupils make decisions about how to present their work and lead inquiries confidently. Pupils in Year 6, for example, investigate accessibility issues in their locality and advocate for change.

Staff know pupils, including those with additional learning needs, well and tailor support to meet their needs. Throughout the school, highly skilled learning support assistants provide effective support for developing pupils' literacy, numeracy, and

social and emotional needs. Staff work successfully together to monitor pupil progress carefully and adjust the support when necessary. They work closely with families and other agencies to select the correct support and to share ways forward. As a result, nearly all pupils make at least expected progress from their individual starting points.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of the locality and the culture and heritage of Wales. They visit places of interest and importance, learn from local authors, and explore traditional crafts such as weaving. Staff encourage all pupils to consider the Wales they live in. Younger pupils explore farming, thinking about where their food comes from and older pupils investigate the population growth, the need to protect habitats and the impact of anti-social behaviour on Cardiff Bay. These experiences support pupils to gain a strong sense of belonging.

Throughout the school, teachers plan opportunities for pupils to hone and apply their creativity. They express themselves in poetry and refine techniques, often producing exceptional work in art and dance. This is a strength of the school. Pupils in Year 3, for example, create seascapes in a range of blue hues as part of their work on protecting oceans. Older pupils investigate and measure angles in the work of Kandinsky and use drama to explore the meaning of paintings depicting significant historical events.

The school's curriculum thoughtfully and sensitively supports pupils' knowledge of diversity and understanding of human rights. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to think about, and make representation in their work, about how these rights make a difference to people across the world. The school's work on celebrating their LGBTQ+ community is a strength.

The school's pupil leadership groups are highly active in the life of the school. Staff ensure that groups such as the Criw Cymraeg and the Eco club support the school's work effectively, for example leading assemblies to promote the Welsh language and devising campaigns to encourage sustainability.

The school generally promotes healthy lifestyles appropriately, for example by running a fruit tuck shop daily. Pupils learn about the importance of sleep and exercise and the impact of being outdoors on well-being. The school's extensive grounds are well-developed and utilised, and pupils make the most of every opportunity to play games and sport during the day. They enjoy the many clubs on offer and benefit from visits to outdoor education centres where they canoe, rock climb, and navigate waterfalls.

Pupils have valuable opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe, for example through relationships education and lessons about internet safety. Leaders include pupils in evaluating and contributing to the school's robust safeguarding culture and the School Council has been instrumental in creating and promoting a useful safeguarding charter. Staff monitor pupils' attendance closely and work with parents to keep absenteeism to a minimum. As a result, the school secures a high level of attendance.

Leadership and management

Together with the whole school community, leaders have developed a clear vision for learning and well-being based on supporting pupils to reach their full potential and become caring and confident lifelong learners. The headteacher demonstrates strong and empathic leadership and is well supported by senior leaders to bring about improvement.

Leaders, teachers and support staff are highly effective in developing and maintaining positive relationships across the whole school community. Staff feel valued, encouraged, and nurtured and very much part of a team. Parents feel involved in the life of the school and are particularly appreciative of the sensitive and bespoke support they receive as families when needed. Leaders, for example, ensure that the school's LGBTQ+ community feels included. They plan appropriately to reduce the impact of the current cost of living crisis on vulnerable families. These close working relationships contribute to establishing a strong sense of community built on trust and mutual respect.

Leaders know their school well and identify the most appropriate areas for improvement accurately. The school's priorities focus directly on improving learning, teaching, leadership and well-being. Staff are clear about their role in securing and evaluating school improvement. Leaders at all levels purposefully monitor the impact of their improvement strategies on pupils and share their findings with staff. Recently, this has resulted in improving pupils' thinking skills, enabling them to better organise and plan their work across the curriculum. Leaders focus closely on the quality of teaching, working with staff to secure high standards across the school.

Leaders create worthwhile opportunities for all staff to reflect on aspects of school development, for example in assessing the impact of inquiry-based learning on pupil progress and in developing independent learners. The school's collaborative approach allows staff to refine their practice and helps to secure positive outcomes for all pupils. Staff regularly share their practice within the school.

The school's procedures for performance management are effective. All staff have access to relevant learning opportunities, which link closely to school improvement priorities and support their professional development successfully. The whole school approach to improving mathematics teaching, for example, enables all staff to develop strategies for improving pupils' problem-solving in their numeracy work.

Leaders plan appropriately to address local and national priorities, including plans to embed the Curriculum for Wales, to secure additional learning needs reform and to developing the Welsh language. The school focuses effectively on improving teaching, developing inquiry, and embedding creativity and critical thinking. As a result, learning experiences are rich, varied, and authentic, enabling pupils to develop as lifelong learners and citizens.

The governing body is knowledgeable, holds leaders to account appropriately and supports the school effectively. Governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and contribute to evaluating the school's work through a range of monitoring activities. They meet regularly with pupils to listen to their views and make appropriate arrangements to support the well-being. Leaders and

governors monitor spending plans and their impact rigorously. They allocate grant funding, including the pupil development grant, effectively to support identified pupils' learning and well-being needs. They use the funding raised by the school's active parent teacher association and the time of volunteers to enrich the curriculum for all pupils. Despite pupils' knowledge of the impact of healthy eating on their bodies, and the governing body's commitment to informing parents about its importance, many pupils continue to eat a range of unhealthy snacks at breaktimes.

Leaders, governors, and staff establish a strong safeguarding culture at Y Bont Faen Primary school. They ensure that the learning experiences they provide help pupils develop a sound understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

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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Publication date: 14/08/2023