



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

**A report on**

**Bigyn County Primary**

**Bigyn Park Terrace  
Bigyn  
Llanelli  
Carmarthenshire  
SA15 1DH**

**Date of inspection: September 2023**

**by**

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

## About Bigyn County Primary

Name of provider	Bigyn County Primary
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	210
Pupils of statutory school age	147
Number in nursery classes	36
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%)	46.0%
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%)	38.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	8.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/07/2015
Start date of inspection	25/09/2023

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](http://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, governors and staff at Bigyn Primary School know pupils well. They place a high priority on ensuring good emotional support for pupils and this means that pupils enjoy coming to school, and feel safe and well cared for by staff. In most cases, pupils behave well and show care and respect for each other, their teachers, and other staff. Leaders have worked effectively to develop the school's support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN).

In many classes, teachers provide interesting and enjoyable lessons and activities that help pupils to make progress. However, the overall quality of teaching is inconsistent, often lacks purpose and does not help pupils to understand what they do well and what they need to improve. In a few classes, teachers do not provide enough challenge for pupils in the activities that they plan or have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. This means that too many pupils do not build their skills systematically and make consistent progress as they move through the school. Whilst leaders are aware of some of the issues with teaching, their self-evaluation and improvement processes are not rigorous enough and progress in improving the quality of teaching has been too slow.

The school's curriculum needs improvement. The school is at the early stages of implementing Curriculum for Wales. Leaders have not taken advantage of the freedom it offers to design a curriculum that allows pupils to learn through meaningful activities that reflect the needs of pupils and their community.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve the rigour of self-evaluation and school improvement activities to ensure that pupils receive consistently good teaching in all classes across the school
- R2 Develop an engaging curriculum that meets the needs of pupils and develops their digital, numeracy and literacy skills systematically in meaningful contexts
- R3 Ensure that lessons and learning activities have a clear purpose and provide opportunities for pupils to understand what they do well and what they need to do to improve further
- R4 Improve attendance

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. 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 about 12 months after the publication of this report.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Many pupils start school with communication, numeracy and social skills below those expected for their age. Overall, most pupils make suitable progress during their time at the school. However, this is not consistent across all year groups. Many pupils eligible for free school meals make progress in line with their peers. Most pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress relative to their starting points.

By Year 2, most pupils have good listening skills and show patience and empathy when listening to their peers. They make appropriate progress in speaking and develop a suitably broad vocabulary. For example, they remember learned verses of songs and perform them with enthusiasm. Most pupils continue to make appropriate progress with their speaking and listening skills as they move from Year 3 to Year 6. For example, pupils in Year 6, demonstrate strong oracy skills when preparing motivational speeches for the Welsh rugby team. They recall and apply previous learning well, for example how to vary the tone and volume of their voice to improve the impact of their speeches.

In many cases, pupils are enthusiastic about reading, both independently and as part of group reading sessions. Pupils in Year 2 read a range of increasingly complex vocabulary well and use their knowledge of letter sounds effectively to read unfamiliar words. By Year 6, a few pupils use inference and deductive skills well when responding to questions from teachers about the text. However, due to a lack of opportunity, pupils across the school do not apply their reading skills frequently or well enough to help their learning in other areas of the curriculum.

Many of the youngest pupils make a good start to developing their initial writing skills. For example, pupils in the nursery show appropriate control when making regular patterns in paint in the outdoor area. As they move through the school, they demonstrate an appropriate understanding of a suitable range of types of writing. For instance, pupils in Year 3 write logical instructions on how to make a Roman shield. However, partly because of teachers' overuse of worksheets, pupils across the school do not write independently and at length frequently enough. In addition, the handwriting of a minority of pupils is poor and they continue to make basic errors in punctuation and grammar.

Overall, too many pupils do not make good enough progress in their knowledge and use of the Welsh language. Pupils often read and write in Welsh at a suitable level, but this is not reflected in their ability to speak and understand spoken Welsh. Although most pupils will respond appropriately to simple questions, they lack the confidence to hold a conversation using more complex sentences by the time they reach Year 6.

Most pupils develop sound skills in mathematics. For instance, pupils in the nursery class sort and compare objects at a simple level and pupils in Year 1 count on and back to 20 with the class teacher. By Year 6, a majority develop more advanced knowledge and understanding, such as calculating and recognising cube and square numbers. However, across the school many pupils lack the ability to apply these effectively in their work across the curriculum or in real life situations.

Most pupils use their digital skills enthusiastically. They regularly access a range of online programmes to develop their mathematical and literacy skills and use the internet to support their learning. For example, pupils in Year 1 use a mapping website to identify locations from aerial images. However, overall, pupils do not develop a full range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills, such as the ability to use spreadsheets and databases. Consequently, too many pupils do not have the ability to use their digital skills to support their learning in other areas of the curriculum.

Many pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their thinking and problem-solving skills. However, in many cases, the application of these skills is paper based, and pupils do not apply them to real life scenarios or as part of their learning across the curriculum.

Pupils largely enjoy developing their creative skills as part of their art activities. For example, they create their own interesting interpretations of the work of the Japanese artist, Yayoi Kusama. However, because of a lack of opportunity they do not acquire a full range of creative skills in areas such as music, drama, digital media, film, and dance.

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

During their time at school, nearly all pupils develop positive working relationships with staff and respectful friendships with each other. They have a clear understanding of the school's expectations of behaviour and, as a result, most pupils are courteous and friendly to staff and visitors. Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and know who to turn to if they need help. They particularly appreciate the caring attitude that staff demonstrate towards them.

Most pupils enjoy learning and usually listen and participate appropriately in lessons. They are often proud of their achievements and happily share their learning with visitors. Younger pupils explore their learning enthusiastically. They listen and follow instructions successfully and begin to develop as independent learners, readily selecting the resources they might need to complete tasks. They recall useful information and build on the skills they learn, for example retrieving the vocabulary they have previously heard when sequencing sentences. Many pupils in Year 6 are often highly engaged in their learning. They are growing as independent learners, attempting to find solutions to problems before seeking support and using online tools to organise their work. However, pupils do not develop their skills as independent learners consistently across the school and a majority of pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. As a result, they do not always engage suitably and on occasion, disrupt learning for others.

Pupils generally value the feedback they receive from teachers during lessons. Pupils in Year 6 recognise how this support helps them improve their work, for example, when drafting, editing, and redrafting a report on Victorian schools. They occasionally use success criteria to reflect on their next steps in learning. Across the school, however, most pupils do not fully understand the purpose of their learning and do not accurately identify the aspects of their work they need to improve. This is because teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities to develop these skills in pupils.

Pupils enjoy opportunities to help others in need, for example by raising money for local charities and to support those affected by the war in Ukraine. The school's head girl and boy listen to the views of other pupils and liaise with leaders to make changes to school organisation. They recently lobbied successfully to reinstate after school clubs following the pandemic. However, overall, the impact of the school's pupil groups is limited and there are too few opportunities for pupils to play a full part in the life and work of the school, to influence decision-making or to contribute their ideas about how they learn.

Pupils learn how to become healthy and confident, and understand how diet, physical activity, and mental health impact on their quality of life. Many pupils develop useful strategies for regulating their behaviour when feeling anxious. Nearly all pupils enjoy opportunities to be active at playtime and during lessons such as rugby, football, and swimming.

Leaders monitor pupils' attendance suitably and identify those pupils whose attendance falls below an acceptable level. Staff communicate with families appropriately to attempt to address the issues preventing pupils from engaging with school. However, despite the range of processes and procedures in place, attendance remains too low.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school is at the early stages of implementing Curriculum for Wales. Teachers have begun to consider ways to make learning more relevant and engaging for pupils. They use visits and visitors well to support pupils' well-being and, in a few cases, to enable pupils to make relevant links in their learning. For instance, visits from the local community police officer and a Roman artefacts workshop help to enhance pupils' skills and knowledge and provide a stimulus for authentic writing and speaking opportunities. However, overall, the school's curriculum offer is not well matched to the needs and context of its pupils and their community. For example, there are too few opportunities to raise pupils' aspirations and or give them a better understanding of the diversity of their local community and the wider world.

The school's approach to teaching pupils from nursery to Year 2 is effective overall. Staff are developing well as a team and provide pupils with engaging experiences both indoors and outside. Interactions between adults and pupils are positive, nurturing, and relaxed. Adults support pupils' progress with useful questions and allow plenty of time for pupils to respond and express their views. Pupils in these classes benefit from the school's extensive outdoor environment. Staff plan appropriate 'foundation learning' based opportunities for pupils to explore, practise and enhance their skills. For example, during Welly Wednesday and Messy Monday, pupils from nursery to Year 2 collaborate well through a variety of stimulating and

open-ended activities. These help them to develop problem-solving, creative and physical skills, as well as their sense of well-being.

In half of the classes from Year 3 to Year 6, teachers have strong subject knowledge and use effective questioning strategies to probe pupils' understanding and extend their learning. For example, during a mathematics lesson most pupils make good progress in their understanding of how to round numbers because of well-targeted questioning by the teacher and a carefully paced series of activities. However, overall, the quality and effectiveness of teaching within this age range is too variable. It does not always support pupils to make the progress they could in developing their skills or in acquiring effective learning behaviours.

Across the school, teachers do not use assessment to inform teaching and learning effectively and pupils are often unclear about the purpose of their learning. The level of challenge or pace of learning does not always match pupils' developmental needs well enough. Teachers generally provide too much scaffolding to support pupils' learning. This limits their development as resilient, independent learners. The feedback that teachers provide for pupils is often positive but does not provide pupils with enough clarity about what they are doing well, what they can improve or how to make those improvements.

Overall, there is effective provision to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. In the early years this supports pupils to make strong progress from their individual starting points. The school's introduction of focused reading sessions and targeted support for groups of pupils has resulted in many pupils making good progress with their reading and knowledge of letter sounds. However, the effectiveness of guided reading sessions is too variable and there are limited opportunities for pupils to use their reading skills to support their wider learning, particularly in the older classes. Similarly, the school's arrangements to develop pupils' writing skills are not cohesive and progressive enough. This means that they frequently move from one type of writing to another without consolidating their skills or building upon previous learning.

Most pupils make suitable progress in numeracy and maths. However, in a few classes, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum, and there is an over reliance on worksheets and not enough challenge to extend the pupils' learning. Overall, teachers do not plan suitably for the progressive development of pupils' skills and, as a result, pupils do not make consistent enough progress.

### **Care, support and guidance**

Staff create a caring community for pupils and their families. They build strong relationships with parents and carers and provide them with valuable targeted support. Leaders, teachers and support staff respond thoughtfully to pupils' emotional needs, enabling pupils to develop a sense of belonging and a level of resilience, for example to help them to regulate their behaviour and emotions when they face challenge. The school's caring and supportive ethos helps most pupils to settle comfortably into school life and contributes to their well-being.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN is a strength. The ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) has created robust systems to help teachers identify the most effective

support for vulnerable pupils including those with ALN and those for whom English is an additional language. The ALNCo monitors the impact of interventions carefully and works closely with staff as they consider how best to adapt teaching approaches to meet the specific needs of the pupils identified. As a result, most pupils with additional needs make sound progress from their starting points. Staff receive suitable training that enables them to plan support for individual social and emotional needs. They are beginning to consider the effectiveness of a wide range of interventions on pupils' progress and to evaluate how well the school's curriculum supports their learning, although this is at an early stage.

A majority of teachers are beginning to consider ways to enrich the curriculum, for example through the use of visits linked to the topics they plan. The oldest pupils benefit from regular visits to the local secondary school where they enjoy using facilities such as the science laboratories. However, teachers do not consistently plan effective, purposeful and authentic experiences for pupils to build and practise their skills. They do not plan carefully enough to allow older pupils, for example, to consider how their learning is useful to them in life or how their experiences raise their aspirations and contribute to the choices they may make about future careers.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to reflect on the values and beliefs of others. Pupils explore the lives of people who follow different religions and describe how special celebrations make them feel. In a few cases, older pupils begin to empathise with the lives of others including people who inspire them such as marine biologists and marathon runners. All pupils benefit from thoughtful opportunities to work with experts when on visits, for example when learning about safety in the mines during a visit to a Welsh heritage centre. Many pupils take part in sports activities and enjoy the after-school clubs on offer.

Pupils are beginning to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales, for example when finding out about the people of their locality, past and present. Pupils in Year 4 learn about gender equality and the change in women's roles through the ages. They consider a child's right to education and explore the life and work of people advocating for change. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to learn about sustainability and the school's work to support pupils' understanding of diversity in their local community and the wider world is generally at an early stage of development.

There is a sound culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and the actions they need to take if they have a concern about a pupil. Pupils know who to turn to if they have worries or concerns about the behaviour of an adult or another pupil. The school has suitable processes in place to address concerns about the attendance of individual pupils, but overall rates of attendance are too low.

## **Leadership and management**

Leaders, staff and governors have a shared ambition to support and improve the well-being of the pupils in their care. They know the local community and its challenges well. Their focus on well-being has resulted in improved behaviour and engagement by pupils in recent years. Leaders have a suitable understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching across the school and demonstrate



appropriately high expectations of the performance of staff. They have prioritised improving teaching and learning in a few classes where the quality of provision is below that expected. However, teaching in these classes remains a concern and has been too slow to improve. Overall, leaders have placed an insufficient focus on developing pedagogy, and the quality of teaching across the school remains too inconsistent with too many pupils not making the progress of which they are capable.

Leaders work suitably to address Welsh government priorities. For example, they act to reduce the cost of the school day by subsidising school trips and allowing pupils to wear school uniform which does not feature the school logo. However, they have made less progress in implementing the Curriculum for Wales and this is still at the early stages of development. They have not fully used the opportunities it provides to adapt what and how they teach to meet the specific needs of pupils and their community. For example to consider how pupils' learning experiences can raise their aspirations or support them to learn about diversity and cultures across the world.

Many staff benefit from positive working relationships with their colleagues and leaders encourage a sense of teamwork. The headteacher recognises a need to distribute leadership further among the teaching team and to widen responsibilities for aspects of the school's work, such as the development of specific curriculum areas and staff involvement in school self-evaluation and improvement processes. Leaders show significant concern for the well-being of staff and take this into consideration when making plans for improvement or introducing new initiatives.

Overall, leaders manage and deploy resources appropriately. The school is currently running at a deficit, but leaders have realistic plans to address this issue during the coming financial year. Leaders use grant funding suitably to support the needs of pupils, such as pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low income households.

Members of the governing body are enthusiastic about their role and are keen to support the school. They have a good understanding of the school's finances and bring professional expertise to carry out their role as a critical friend and ensure that financial resources are used effectively. However, governors' role in the self-evaluation process is underdeveloped and relies too heavily on the information provided by school leaders. As a result, governors do not have a complete picture of pupils' progress.

Leaders undertake a suitable range of self-evaluation activities to arrive at an understanding of the school's strength and areas for improvement. For example, they carry out learning walks focusing on aspects of the school's work, such as pupils' standards in maths, the quality of their oracy skills and how well they participate in lessons. Leaders regularly survey the views of parents and the headteacher listens to the views of the head girl and head boy as well as other pupils to obtain their views on what the school can improve. However, overall, leaders' approach to monitoring and self-evaluation is not strategic enough, and does not involve a wide enough range of staff or lead to clear improvement actions that leaders follow up in a timely manner.

The school has appropriate arrangements to support the professional learning of staff. Professional learning to help staff to support pupils with ALN is a strength and

has helped improve the quality and effectiveness of the school's provision. There are suitable opportunities for staff in the younger classes to observe effective practice within the school and in other schools. However, this is not consistent across the school and staff in the older classes do not observe and share effective practice well enough. The school has focused significantly and rightly on using professional learning to improve pupil well-being. However, there has been less focus on developing the quality of teaching and the school's approach to Curriculum for Wales.

## 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)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

© Crown Copyright 2023: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 27/11/2023