



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

A report on

Porthcawl Primary School

**Meadow Lane
Porthcawl
CF36 5EY**

Date of inspection: November 2023

by

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

About Porthcawl Primary School

Name of provider	Porthcawl Primary School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	178
Pupils of statutory school age	138
Number in nursery classes	20
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%)	21.7%
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%)	5.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	04/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	15/06/2015
Start date of inspection	06/11/2023

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

All staff and pupils are proud to be a part of Porthcawl Primary School. The enthusiastic school team have created a clear vision to ensure that pupil well-being is at the forefront of the life and work of the school. Leaders work purposefully to create a safe and inclusive environment where pupils and staff feel valued and supported. Pupils are happy, and keen to learn.

Staff meet pupils' social and emotional needs well. They deal with pupils' concerns thoughtfully and appropriately. Learning support officers work effectively with pupils in small groups, offering valuable individual support for vulnerable pupils. As a result, most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress during their time at school.

Most pupils make good progress across the school and develop their reading, writing and numeracy skills well. All pupils have strong speaking skills. They confidently talk about their work and school and contribute effectively to lessons. However, on occasions, a few pupils do not listen well enough to others and disrupt the learning taking place. Pupils are beginning to use the full range of mathematical concepts suitably in other areas of learning and use their knowledge of Welsh informally. Across the school, pupils' digital skills are underdeveloped.

Staff provide a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils that builds effectively on their knowledge and understanding. Teachers plan a variety of purposeful learning experiences. However, they over-direct the learning for older pupils and there are too few opportunities for pupils to become independent learners. Planned lessons in these classes are not challenging enough to ensure that all pupils, including those who are more able, achieve to the best of their ability. In the Foundation learning classes, activities to develop pupils' independence do not have a clear learning intention and, as a result, pupils do not develop the intended skills well enough.

The headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors work together effectively. Overall, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teaching consistently provides opportunities to challenge pupils of all abilities, so that they develop well as independent learners
- R2 Provide opportunities for pupils to build their digital and listening skills systematically and coherently across the school
- R3 Ensure that all activities in the Nursery to Year 2 classes have clear learning intentions

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

When pupils start school, many have skills that are at a level at least expected for their age. They settle quickly and, during their time at the school, many pupils make good progress, including a majority of the pupils eligible for free school meals. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) progress well from their individual starting points. However, a few pupils, particularly those who are more able, do not make the progress they are capable of.

Overall, pupils make good progress in developing their speaking skills. From a very young age, most pupils are articulate and express themselves clearly. Nursery pupils talk confidently about their family and where they live and are happy to engage with all adults. By Year 2, most pupils give simple explanations about their learning, for example when discussing what they find out about floating and sinking. As pupils progress through the school, most develop extensive, mature vocabulary, and talk knowledgeably about their work and school experiences. However, pupils do not develop their listening skills, especially in group scenarios, as competently.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They are beginning to expand their vocabulary during planned daily sessions. Overall, many pupils understand and respond appropriately to simple instructions and commands but lack confidence when engaging in simple conversations.

Most pupils develop their reading skills effectively and apply them purposefully to support their learning. Most younger pupils use their knowledge of phonics to decode unfamiliar words confidently. By Year 2, many pupils show a good understanding of what they read and make sensible predictions about what might happen next in a story. As they move through the school, most pupils continue to develop their reading skills successfully. By Year 6, pupils read a variety of challenging texts with good understanding.

Across the school, most pupils progress well in developing their writing skills. Many pupils in Nursery mark make and create symbols when developing their early writing skills. As they move through the school, pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 write confidently for a different range of audiences and use vocabulary creatively to produce interesting pieces of writing, such as an emotive letter from a soldier in the trenches during World War One. Although, most pupils write confidently in other areas of the curriculum, they do not always consider their presentation suitably and errors in spelling and punctuation are sometimes left uncorrected.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of mathematical concepts as they move through the school. Many pupils in nursery and reception classes make a sound start in recognising and using numbers up to 20 and use this knowledge confidently in their work. On the whole, most pupils recall previous learning well, develop purposeful methods of calculation and apply these to discrete problem-solving activities. For example, Year 6 pupils calculate the cost of ingredients needed to make cakes for their bake-off competition accurately. Most pupils understand that data can be presented in a variety of forms, such as graphs and charts. They are beginning to apply their numeracy skills to other areas of learning.

Across the school most pupils use digital skills to research, communicate information and create interesting presentations. However, most pupils do not develop a wide enough range of digital skills.

Nearly all pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to develop their creative skills during lessons. Pupils mix and blend colours competently, for example to paint a landscape or to re-create their own street art. Across the school, most pupils develop their physical skills well during their daily playground activities, lessons or taking part in extra-curricular clubs. However, pupils' ability to think critically and to solve problems is limited.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils thrive in the school's nurturing environment. They feel safe, secure, and happy. Pupils feel that adults in school listen to their views and take them into account in decisions that affect them. Most pupils feel respected and treated fairly.

Most pupils have a secure understanding of how to stay healthy through eating healthily and taking regular exercise. They understand the importance of attending school and speak knowledgeably about how to stay safe when using the internet.

Most pupils are aware of each other's needs and take great care of each other. They make sure that all new pupils to the school are given a warm welcome and help them settle quickly. This has a positive effect on pupils' happiness and confidence as they gain a sense of belonging. Pupils develop a strong sense of empathy during their time in school and take purposeful action, for example through effectively creating the role of playground buddies to ensure that other pupils do not experience any feelings of anxiousness during break and lunchtimes.

Many pupils behave well in lessons, when moving around the school, during group work and at break times. They form and maintain friendships and positive working relationships with staff. However, when lessons do not engage them successfully, a few pupils become restless.

Overall, pupils across the school are developing as capable and ambitious learners with a strong drive to improve their skills. They settle quickly and tackle most activities confidently. Many pupils persevere well when finding tasks difficult. Year 1 develop a sound understanding that making mistakes is part of the learning process when investigating and exploring how magnets work, for example. However, due to a lack of opportunity, most older pupils rely on the teachers to direct them in their

learning and, as a result, their ability to work independently is limited. They have few opportunities to contribute to what and how they learn or to develop their creativity and problem-solving.

Most pupils value and respond to feedback from adults and their peers. As a result, they are beginning to improve their written work and support others to improve theirs. Most pupils engage successfully when sharing ideas in pairs and respond well when asked to contribute to whole-class discussion. Most younger pupils happily co-operate, for example when sharing equipment. However, when working in larger groups, a few pupils tend to talk over each other or shout out answers, which disrupts the learning for other pupils.

Across the school, pupils including those with ALN and who are eligible for free school meals show maturity when explaining how they support the work of the school effectively through their leadership roles. They describe how they contribute to the school's safeguarding culture by joining the caretaker on regular site inspections and improvements have been made to create a safer school environment. In addition, the eco committee develop pupils' awareness of how to look after the environment and how to become more sustainable by conserving electricity during break and lunchtimes.

Most pupils are developing well as ethically informed citizens. They apply their sound knowledge of human rights to understanding issues of equality in Wales and beyond.

Teaching and learning experiences

All staff have good working relationships with pupils which foster a caring and inclusive environment across the school. Teachers make valuable use of the highly skilled learning support officers and, together, they support learning effectively.

Staff are developing a new curriculum that builds on learning suitably and provides a breadth of experiences for pupils. Teachers plan relevant activities to deepen pupils' knowledge and to explore areas such as ethnicity and tradition well. Teachers arrange a range of visits to places of interest in the local area and further afield to enhance learning experiences. They visit the Porthcawl museum, for example, to learn about the First World War, and to the capital city to learn the history of Cardiff. In addition, they creatively use visitors to the school to enrich pupils' learning, such as members of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Elvis impersonators as part of their music lessons on the rock and roll era.

Across the school, teachers are beginning to provide suitable opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills regularly and purposefully across the curriculum. The school provides pupils with opportunities to develop their skills in writing successfully. Daily reading sessions support pupils to develop and transfer their reading skills to other areas of their learning effectively. The opportunities for pupils to develop their English-speaking skills are highly effective and a strength of the school. However, across the school, many teachers do not provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to make suitable progress in developing their listening skills.

A very few members of staff model the Welsh language extremely well and regularly use incidental Welsh throughout the day. Teachers are beginning to provide suitable

opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh skills appropriately in their learning. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills, and, as a result, pupils do not make sufficient progress in developing digital competence.

Teachers develop pupils' understanding of Welsh culture successfully. They give a prominent place in their curriculum to develop pupils' understanding of the history, culture, and heritage of Wales. Teachers provide pupils with purposeful opportunities to learn about influential local and national people.

Teachers have good knowledge of the curriculum. They provide clear explanations at the beginning of lessons to ensure that all pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to succeed. Teachers use suitable approaches and resources to engage pupils in the learning. Nearly all staff encourage pupils to do their best and praise them for their achievements. Teachers provide pupils with useful verbal and written feedback in their literacy work and, as a result, pupils know how well they are doing. In addition, there are regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and other's learning. However, overall, feedback in other areas of the curriculum is less effective.

Over time, teachers ensure that many pupils make good progress in their learning. However, in classes from Year 3 to Year 6, teachers tend to over-direct lessons, which inhibits pupils from developing their skills independently. Teachers do not provide suitable challenge, particularly for pupils identified as being more able. In addition, most pupils in the Foundation learning classes do not always understand what is expected of them when completing their tasks. As a result, they become disengaged which slows the pace of learning.

Staff in all classes use the extensive school grounds suitably. They provide a range of purposeful extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' physical skills. Annual residential visits to Llangrannog, for example, enable pupils to learn about team work while taking part in outdoor activities.

Care, support and guidance

All staff work diligently to create a caring community and a safe learning environment. The school ensures that the health and well-being of pupils is a priority. All staff respond effectively to pupils' emotional needs and promptly address any problems they may have. As a result of this support, pupils' well-being and overall behaviour is good.

The school's support for pupils with ALN is a strength. Staff monitor progress carefully and effectively to identify and provide the support pupils need. The ALN co-ordinator works closely with outside agencies to plan purposeful support to enable pupils to progress in their learning and in their personal and social development. Learning support officers provide effective support for literacy and numeracy. The school has strong processes to help pupils who need additional support with their well-being and developing their social skills. In addition, the school works positively with specialists to develop pupils' confidence to engage in school life.

The school encourages pupils from different groups such as those eligible for free school meals to take on responsibilities. These opportunities enable pupils to develop leadership roles well. The school council for example, organised a fund-raising event for an earthquake trauma charity. These experiences strengthen pupils' awareness of the impact of climate change on a community. Staff plan appropriate learning experiences to broaden pupils' understanding of issues such as inequality and how this can affect society. Overall, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of diversity and global issues.

The school makes strong links with the local community. Pupils are proud of their Welsh heritage and culture and are beginning to identify closely with their town and its surrounding area. From a young age, pupils develop as active citizens and make valuable contributions to the locality, to keep the beaches free from litter and to regenerate green spaces on new build developments. These experiences help the pupils to respect and care for their locality. The school provides pupils with opportunities to study a range of artistic styles. It makes good use of visits to study a piece of street art painted by a famous anonymous painter, for example, to inspire and influence pupils' creativity. Through regular music and dance sessions, pupils develop interesting expressive art skills. The pupils perform in key events in the local church and perform in school shows annually for their families.

The school plans a range of purposeful activities for pupils to explore their rights. As a result, pupils across the school confidently distinguish between right and wrong. Staff provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral and ethical understanding through the curriculum and daily acts of worship. They are beginning to provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own, and the beliefs of others.

Staff provide a variety of opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills successfully. They enhance the learning using the expertise of visiting sportsperson and through opportunities to play against local schools. The school has effective arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily and to help pupils to understand what they need to do to look after themselves. The school has a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, which include, sport, digital skills and well-being. These enable pupils to develop their skills in areas that interest them and develop their social skills to embrace new challenges.

The school monitors pupils' attendance effectively and, as a result, attendance rates are good. There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has developed an inclusive and caring school culture. Together with the governors, staff, pupil, and parents, she has developed a vision that focuses strongly on pupil and staff well-being as the cornerstone of school improvement. A particular strength is the focus on providing significant support for pupils with additional learning needs. Leaders focus well on the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on educational attainment. They assign the pupil development grant to worthwhile initiatives that make a significant difference to pupils' emotional well-being. As a result, the majority of pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households who receive extra support make good progress. Leaders

also ensure that all staff understand and promote the strong safeguarding culture in the school.

The headteacher has established a committed and enthusiastic team who have clear roles and responsibilities. Leaders have established a positive culture and ethos of school improvement. They link improvement priorities purposefully to professional learning. For example, professional learning to develop staff's understanding of the principles of Curriculum for Wales enables them to plan effectively to ensure that there is appropriate balance and breadth of experience for pupils in their learning experiences. The school ensures that learning support officers are highly trained to improve vulnerable pupils' social skills. This impacts positively on many pupils' readiness to learn.

The governing body is well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are beginning to develop valuable links with leaders of areas of learning. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties suitably, ensuring that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Governors are very supportive of the school and proud of the way it cares for its pupils.

The school's self-evaluation processes involve all staff in a range of useful monitoring activities. Leaders gather feedback from pupils and parents and respond purposefully, providing workshops for parents to enable them to support their child's reading skills at home, for example. The school gathers robust first-hand evidence to evaluate pupil progress and the quality of teaching. Leaders correctly identify important areas for development, for example to ensure that pupils apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum. In recent years, the school has used self-evaluation to strengthen its approach to supporting well-being and to improve pupils' progress in writing.

The school's improvement plans link purposefully to national and local priorities. The focus on developing pupils' ability to speak Welsh, for example, is beginning to have a positive impact on progress. However, the school's evaluations do not identify a few important aspects in need of improvement.

The school shares important information with parents in a timely way. Leaders work in partnership with parents and the wider school community to improve opportunities for all pupils.

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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