



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

A report on

Brackla Primary School

**Brackla Way
Brackla
Bridgend
CF31 2EZ**

Date of inspection: January 2024

by

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

About Brackla Primary School

Name of provider	Brackla Primary School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	336
Pupils of statutory school age	247
Number in nursery classes	44
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 23.7%)	27.8%
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 13.2%)	1.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	8.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2016
Start date of inspection	29/01/2024

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

Brackla is a happy and welcoming school, where pupils and staff feel cared for and thrive. Over many years the headteacher has fostered a successful learning culture where pupils and staff feel proud to be members of the school community and want to do their best.

The headteacher and school leaders work purposefully alongside the governing body to secure improvements for the school. Together, they understand school strengths and areas for development and plan accurate strategic actions to secure improvement. Leaders have developed a culture where staff are keen to develop their own skills and teaching. Leaders work closely with partners to measure the success of initiatives. They take a sensible and considered approach to change and, as a result, the quality of teaching across the school is consistently good.

School leaders have worked hard to develop the learning environment to ensure it meets the needs of the pupils well. They have developed the outdoors and make good use of small rooms and corridors to create break out rooms where pupils can develop their independent and collaborative skills well.

The school's curriculum takes account of pupils' interests and reflects the Curriculum for Wales successfully. Teachers and support staff are skilful and support pupils to develop a range of skills successfully. A strong feature of the school is how teachers ensure that pupils apply the skills they have in other areas of learning purposefully.

Teachers and support staff plan together effectively. They provide a wide range of interesting learning activities and provide good opportunities for pupils to explore their own thinking and how they can approach a problem successfully. However, teachers' feedback does not always challenge pupils to improve their work sufficiently.

Staff place a strong emphasis on supporting the well-being of all. Leaders and staff work closely with pupils and families to ensure that they tailor the support they need to individual circumstances. As a result, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), engage well in their learning, make good progress and achieve well.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the quality of feedback to ensure that pupils understand what they do well and what they need to do to improve

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils start school with understanding and skills below those expected for their age. During their time in school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and pupils affected by socio-economic disadvantage, make good progress from their individual starting points.

Many pupils start school with speech and language skills that are lower than those expected for their age. They make quick progress and soon start to speak more confidently and express themselves more clearly. As they move through the school, many pupils develop a wide and rich vocabulary. They listen carefully to good language role models that surround them and use new words they have learnt purposefully. By the time they reach Year 6, many pupils' communication skills are strong. Most communicate effectively with their peers and staff and are keen to talk about what they are learning. This supports their ability to collaborate effectively, for example when debating the positive and negatives of adding extra technology to a lifeboat.

Throughout the school, pupils develop their reading skills well. Younger pupils develop a good understanding of letter sounds and use this knowledge to read unfamiliar words successfully. As they move through school many pupils read more challenging texts with fluency and develop strong comprehension skills for their age. The oldest pupils read more complex texts with good understanding and appropriate expression. They enjoy talking about the books they have read. Throughout the school, pupils' strong reading skills support their ability to work independently effectively.

Across the school, many pupils develop their writing skills well. The youngest pupils make marks using a variety of writing tools purposefully. By Year 2, many pupils write simple sentences confidently. As they progress through school, pupils develop their spelling and punctuation, and present their work neatly. Older pupils enjoy writing in authentic contexts, and many pupils organise their writing suitably, for example using paragraphs and appropriate connectives. However, most older pupils do not regularly improve their writing beyond correcting spelling and grammar well enough.

Across the school, most pupils develop a good understanding of mathematical concepts. Many of the youngest pupils soon develop a good understanding of number. Over time, many pupils develop a good understanding of place value by partitioning numbers into ones, tens, and hundreds. This means they tackle a range of more complex calculations accurately. Most older pupils build well on these firm foundations and explain their thinking sensibly. They apply these skills in other areas of learning purposefully and successfully. For example, pupils in Year 6 interpret the data they have collected on the survival rate of different groups of people in the Titanic disaster. They look for patterns, and suggest reasons for the patterns they see.

Most pupils develop digital skills well. Year 2 pupils create online virtual representations of a coal mine. This develops their understanding of what it would

feel like to work underground and challenges them to persevere and use software creatively. Older pupils ably use their digital skills creatively across the curriculum, for example when using computer coding software to send messages to friends, and “debugging” their lines of code.

Many pupils have positive attitudes to developing their Welsh language skills. They have an appropriate understanding of simple phrases used in their daily Welsh lessons. Older pupils use wall displays successfully to remind them of the phrases they are practicing. However, many pupils lack the confidence to use the words and phrases they have learnt in other areas of learning and around school.

Most pupils develop and use their physical, problem solving and thinking skills effectively when working inside and outdoors. Older pupils combine skills when working together to make a tripod to cook food over a fire. They work collaboratively and use perseverance to when tying knots to ensure the tripods they have made are fit for purpose.

Most pupils develop their creative skills well. They enjoy the creative process and understand that making mistakes is an important part of learning. For example, older pupils work support younger pupils to develop melody and rhythm successfully when learning to play boomwhackers.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils show pride in their school and feel safe because of its nurturing and caring ethos. Most pupils enjoy attending school and find their lessons interesting. Nearly all pupils’ behaviour in class, when working in break-out areas and learning outside is exemplary. They show care and respect for each other and trust that school staff listen to their views and take them into account. Pupils play together happily, take turns, and support each other well, both during lessons and at playtimes. The “Play Pals” playtime buddies, encourage pupils to stay active as well as offering kind support to younger pupils.

Nearly all pupils understand how to make healthy choices relating to diet and how to keep themselves physically healthy. For example, at playtimes many pupils use the pupil run ‘Snack Shack’ to choose a healthy snack. Many pupils enjoy the physical activities offered by the school. For example, pupils attempt an expedition, in which the pupils become ‘stranded’ and must walk back to school, using a map and compass. This develops their team working skills and ability to persevere effectively. Many pupils enjoy participating in the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered to them, such as karate and music clubs. Most pupils know how to keep themselves safe online.

Outdoor learning is a strength of the school. The school’s outdoor leader prepares stimulating experiences for the pupils, from which they develop confidence, self-esteem, perseverance, and strong creativity skills. For example, younger pupils construct a dragon from natural materials and older pupils make bird boxes for a bird watching day.

Nearly all pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They show good levels of interest in their work and talk enthusiastically about it. Nearly all pupils listen

attentively to teachers and concentrate well on their work during lessons. They collaborate well in groups, and many make positive contributions to discussions, showing respect for the contributions of others. Most pupils respond well to verbal feedback, both from staff and their peers. A few pupils use feedback suitably to move their learning forward. However, most pupils do not have enough opportunities to use feedback to reflect on what they do well and what they need to do to improve their work.

Most pupils demonstrate the characteristics needed to become ambitious, confident, capable and independent learners. During lessons, most pupils are highly engaged in their work. They enjoy exploring new and unfamiliar experiences and ideas.

Most pupils are beginning to develop as ethical, informed citizens well. They are fair and caring in their dealings with others and demonstrate a good knowledge of children's rights.

Nearly all pupils develop as enterprising and creative contributors well. For example, pupils research types of street food, create their own street food menus, design a logo and an advertising campaign. Finally, they make and sell the food to staff and pupils and calculate the profit made.

Many pupils take an active part in the life of the school through pupil leadership groups. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously. For example, the Senedd group produced a child friendly version of the school's development plan. As a result, most pupils feel their ideas are valued and pupils enjoy what they are learning.

Most pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly and on time. As a result, they are settled in school and ready to start learning at the beginning of the school day.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff establish positive working relationships with pupils. The school provides a broad and balanced range of learning experiences that most pupils enjoy. The school has created a clear vision for its curriculum in collaboration with local schools. As a result, the curriculum builds successfully on pupils' skills, knowledge, and experiences as they move through the school. Teachers plan a wide range of interesting topics that reflect the pupils' interests suitably.

The school's curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to visit sites important to Welsh heritage. For example, pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 visit a coal mining museum to understand of what life was like for people in Wales in past. However, teachers do not plan learning experiences that reflect the local area well enough.

Teachers' knowledge of the curriculum is good. They set high expectations and plan clear objectives for learning. They deploy support staff to support pupils' progress successfully. Teachers and support staff use questioning to challenge pupils' thinking well, and this deepens their understanding of key concepts effectively. Staff use a variety of stimuli to engage pupils in their work successfully. For example, pupils in Year 6 study a variety of objects including a necklace similar to those found on the Titanic to inspire their extended writing.

Teachers have developed spaces within classrooms, corridors and other rooms into exciting break out areas. This allows pupils to follow their own interests related to the topics. This develops their independence and collaboration skills exceptionally well. This is a strong feature of the school. Outdoor learning is a strength of the school. Staff plan a range of rich activities that encourage pupils to apply their numeracy and literacy skills purposefully. For example, staff provide opportunities for younger pupils to use their numeracy skills well when making a life size model of a dinosaur with sticks. This develops their understanding of size and position well. Furthermore, they develop their speaking and listening skills effectively when negotiating with each other how to use sticks to create the dinosaur skeleton.

Staff provide a few worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn about religions and cultures of the world. For example, pupils in Year 6 research and then recreate a Mexican day of the dead festival. However, opportunities for pupils to learn about the history and experiences of minority ethnic people are limited.

Staff provide pupils with regular opportunities to learn and practice their Welsh language skills in daily 'Helpwr Heddiw' lessons. As a result, pupils develop their Welsh language communication skills well. For example, older pupils confidently discuss the weather using past and present tense. However, opportunities for pupils to use their Welsh skills outside these lessons are limited.

Arrangements to monitor pupil progress are highly effective. Staff use the information to plan appropriate activities to support pupils in their learning. Many teachers provide timely verbal feedback to help pupils understand how they can improve their work. Overall, feedback does not challenge pupils to think deeply about their learning. For example, feedback on older pupils' written work tends to focus on correcting spelling and punctuation and does not give pupils clear ways forward to improve the quality of their written work.

Most teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to recap their previous learning at the start of lessons. Teachers use success criteria and clear objectives consistently to enable most pupils to understand what the expectations for learning are. Reports to parents and carers provide beneficial information on their child's progress and their next steps in learning.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a happy, nurturing community and the positive relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are a strong feature of the school. Staff have excellent working relationships with pupils, and, as a result, behaviour is exemplary.

The provision for pupils identified as having ALN is excellent. The school's ALNCo works successfully in partnership with staff members to ensure that there is good identification, tracking and effective provision for individuals and groups of pupils from an early age. Comprehensive pupil progress reviews result in staff members developing a deeper understanding of the needs of these pupils. The school successfully uses a person-centred approach and works effectively with families ensuring that pupil voice is at the heart of all they do. Support staff deliver a range of programmes in each class that supports pupils' well-being and learning well. Staff

work closely with a range of services who offer specialist support to pupils with academic, emotional and social needs. These arrangements ensure that most targeted pupils make good progress from their starting points.

The ALNCo works closely with teachers to ensure vulnerable pupils can access the curriculum. For example, daily welcome sessions support pupils to regulate their emotions and prepare them to learn effectively. This helps to create a positive atmosphere around the school, that enhances pupils' mental health and happiness, and impacts positively on learning throughout the school.

The school encourages pupils of all backgrounds and abilities to take on leadership roles in a variety of purposeful ways. These opportunities broaden pupils' understanding of the importance of becoming active citizens within the school community. The school provides opportunities for pupils to participate in decision-making that results in improvements. Digital leaders, for example, advise other pupils how to stay safe online.

The provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is appropriate. Pupils take part in a range of Christian celebrations and teachers plan opportunities for pupils to learn about religions. For example Year 3 and 4 pupils learn about Judaism and celebrate the Tu BiShvat festival. They enjoy sampling food and plant trees as part of this celebration. Staff enable pupils to make beneficial contributions to the life of their community. For example, pupils visit a local care home to help the elderly understand how to use new technology.

The school provides a range of opportunities that help pupils develop an understanding of Welsh culture and heritage. Visitors are welcomed into the school to promote Cynefin, for example the Bridgend Historical Society talk to pupils about the local history.

The school places importance on providing a varied range of visits and visitors that support the curriculum and engage pupils in their learning. For example, a trip to Techniquet develops older pupils' understanding of science and technology successfully.

The school has robust procedures for monitoring attendance, and as a result attendance rates are improving. Staff promote a highly robust culture of safeguarding, ensuring that the welfare of all is a priority. As a result, arrangements for safeguarding give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides excellent leadership. She is supported by a highly effective leadership team.

They create a welcoming, happy school community with well-being at the centre. Along with other senior leaders, they have worked collaboratively with staff to develop a clear vision. Senior leaders place a high value on staff well-being and all staff have clear roles and responsibilities.

School leaders have developed an annual cycle of self-evaluation which enables staff and leaders to review progress on areas of improvement. Staff at all levels fully

understand their role in contributing to school improvement and regularly review progress towards them, for example using key milestones to ensure planned actions are on track. The school's ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress ensures that they accurately identify the approaches that are successful and those that may need reviewing. Leaders know the strengths and skills of staff and utilise these effectively to provide high quality learning experiences for all pupils, for example when planning enrichment activities.

Senior leaders encourage and support innovation without comprising the focus on pupil progress. There are robust performance management processes in place, which, together with a detailed programme of professional learning, ensure that the whole-school team receives appropriate development opportunities. School staff take ownership of their professional learning and are given time to implement and embed improvements. This has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Leaders have established a culture which recognises initial teacher education as one of its core responsibilities. This is reflected in its strategic planning as part of a continuous cycle of professional development, and through its model of effective practice for students focussed on high quality teaching and learning experiences. The school has co-ordinated visits from groups of students to the school for workshops and contributed to training at the University. Pupils at the school benefit from this partnership as part of the Young Educational Research Network.

The school engages and communicates well with parents and carers, who feel that they are listened to. Most parents and carers feel well informed about the school's curriculum and benefit from accessing workshops and regular updates through newsletters and online platforms. They feel that teachers and leaders respond well when they have concerns or questions about their child's school experience.

Leaders and governors pay good attention to addressing national priorities, such as the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales and raising pupils' attendance.

Governors and leaders ensure that grant funding is spent appropriately, for example to mitigate the impact of poverty. The school has invested wisely to develop learning areas both indoors and in the outdoor environment. These are utilised effectively and enrich the learning experiences of the pupils. Governors provide effective support and challenge to the school. They are dedicated to their role to support leaders to improve teaching and learning.

Governors ensure that the school promotes healthy eating and drinking effectively. School leaders establish and maintain a strong safeguarding culture at the school.

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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