



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

A report on
Bryn Primary School

**Forest Hill
The Bryn
Pontllanfraith
Blackwood
NP12 2PL**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

About Bryn Primary School

Name of provider	Bryn Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	164
Pupils of statutory school age	113
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 [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	13.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	22.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	13/06/2022

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

Leaders and staff at Bryn Primary School work together effectively to create an inclusive, happy and nurturing learning environment. They focus well on creating interesting learning experiences and this ensures that pupils engage with their learning enthusiastically. Staff include a broad range of opportunities within the curriculum to develop pupils' creative and thinking skills.

Pupils at the school show kindness towards others. They work and play together supportively and considerately. They engage with staff well and influence their own learning valuably. Most make strong progress in their learning. They develop effective skills, such as numeracy and digital skills, and use them creatively in their work across the curriculum.

The headteacher and other leaders support and challenge staff at the school thoughtfully. They ensure that staff's professional learning is purposeful and focuses effectively on areas that benefit pupils. All staff understand their roles well. Leaders prioritise the well-being of pupils and of staff to ensure that the school is both a happy and a purposeful learning community.

Recommendations

- R1 Focus self-evaluation and improvement work more sharply on what pupils know, understand and can do
- R2 Improve pupils' confidence and ability to speak in Welsh, both in lessons and around the school
- R3 Ensure that teachers' feedback addresses errors in pupils' learning more robustly

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils at the school make effective progress from their different starting points. This includes pupils with additional learning needs who make strong progress towards their individual goals and targets.

Most pupils develop their language and communication skills well. On entry to the school, most improve their vocabulary quickly and develop speaking skills that enable them to engage well with adults and with each other. Younger pupils communicate their needs and thoughts confidently. They listen with increasing interest and sustained concentration for extended periods of time. As they move through the school, most pupils become increasingly articulate. Older pupils listen purposefully to gain information. They volunteer opinions, giving reasons for their answers. They discuss their work thoughtfully in pairs and in groups, and communicate well to achieve tasks, deciding as a group how to go about them.

Many younger pupils enjoy hearing stories and talk about them enthusiastically. From the nursery onwards, they begin to recognise letters and their sounds. Over time, they learn to combine these sounds and start to use them to read simple unfamiliar words. However, a minority of pupils in and around Year 2 struggle to use their skills to read well enough, for example to support their learning across the curriculum. Many older pupils enjoy reading for pleasure and most choose books confidently based on their favourite authors or personal interests. Many read aloud with fluency and suitable expression. They use skills, such as skimming and scanning, to find information they need texts, for example when analysing certain words or phrases in poems. They show a good awareness of techniques that authors use to engage readers, such as the use of images or using certain words for effect.

Most younger pupils make good progress with their writing. From making marks and writing single letters in the nursery, they progress well to attempting simple sentences. In Year 1 and Year 2, many pupils begin to write confidently, for instance to produce lists of simple instructions for a recipe. Older pupils write imaginatively for a range of purposes, and many make interesting vocabulary choices. However, a minority do not pay enough attention to the presentation of their written work and make too many mistakes with spelling and punctuation. Throughout the school, most pupils use their literacy skills creatively across other areas of their learning. For example, younger pupils write creatively about how to save animals from plastic pollution and pupils in Year 5 write letters to school leaders about including more local history in their curriculum.

Many pupils develop simple Welsh language skills suitably. Pupils in reception and Year 1 sing songs in Welsh enthusiastically and understand and respond to teachers' instructions well. By Year 2, many pupils use a few sentences accurately, such as saying what the weather is like. They pronounce simple Welsh words well. As they progress through the school, they write basic sentences in Welsh, and many make a good attempt at reading their own work. However, a majority of older pupils struggle to answer basic questions accurately and are reluctant to use their Welsh speaking skills.

Most pupils develop their mathematical and numeracy skills well. The youngest pupils count accurately within 10 and begin to recognise what happens when you add or take one away from a number, for example when taking birthday candles from a cake. Many use mathematical vocabulary effectively during their play, for example discussing whether cups are more or less full in their tea party. By Year 3 and Year 4, many pupils use their understanding of multiplication tables confidently, for instance to calculate the number of cakes in batches. By Year 6, most pupils work effectively with a range of calculations and apply their numeracy skills in different contexts and with increasing accuracy. They calculate the cost of items and their profit when planning a craft fair using fractions accurately. They apply their problem-solving and calculation skills well to amend plans to ensure that they do not incur a loss.

Across the school, many pupils develop and use their digital skills effectively. They often begin projects by researching independently and presenting information to help them ask questions about topics and direct their own learning. They present information and data in increasingly detailed and complex forms, including bar graphs, line graphs and pie charts. For example, younger pupils present their research on pets using simple charts, while pupils in Year 6 use pie charts to present data on the proportions of people of different religions in Wales. Older pupils use coding confidently to create animations, such as those that send positive messages about healthy eating. Most create simple spreadsheet accurately, such as when considering census information.

Pupils' creative skills develop well through working with and studying different artists, including a sculptor. They use these skills beneficially, such as when illustrating their work across the curriculum using a range of techniques and different styles. For example, older pupils create detailed paintings of historic buildings, such as the Colosseum in Rome.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Relationships between pupils and all adults across the school are highly effective. As a result, nearly all pupils are proud members of Bryn Primary and have a strong sense of belonging to the school. New pupils settle well and quickly become active members of the school community. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the school rules and know these are in place to ensure everyone is safe and can learn. As a result, nearly all pupils behave well and feel safe at school.

Most pupils act considerately towards other pupils and adults. They demonstrate values such as respect and kindness well in class and when playing at break and lunchtimes. Through the many opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings, the willingness of the staff to listen and the use of the safe spaces, all pupils feel that they are supported. As a result of these positive attitudes and the work staff have done to create a strong supportive ethos, the school is a calm and well organised learning environment.

Pupils are proud of the school and most take full advantage of opportunities to be influential. For example, younger pupils supported staff to create the nursery garden. Older pupils were fully involved in designing and improving the new playground. They decided to include a sensory garden, a seating area for reading and an adventure

playground. The school's Senedd supports leaders effectively. They lead school assemblies and talk to pupils about important priorities, such as the effects of bullying and how this can impact on well-being. The school's digi-wizards, support other classes to use new apps and tools. In addition, pupils support school policies and procedures beneficially. For instance, older pupils have helped create useful, simplified policies for attendance and safeguarding that are child friendly. They have provided information leaflets to parents about the new curriculum.

Most pupils are developing well as healthy individuals. They consider the way they travel to school and the impact this may have on their health and the environment thoughtfully. They make sensible choices to become physically active, for example by persuading their parents to drive part of the way to school and walk the rest. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily. In line with their stage of development, most pupils understand the importance of staying safe online. For example, Year 6 pupils outline in helpful detail the dangers that could happen as a result of unsuitable use of the internet.

Most pupils are becoming more ethically informed with a majority speaking confidently about their rights as children. For example, they met with the deputy minister for social services to discuss the law that ends the use of physical punishment in Wales.

Most pupils display good attitudes to learning. They settle to work quickly and purposefully and behave sensibly. They engage well with their tasks and work effectively in small groups, pairs and independently and most make good progress with the development of their understanding and skills. For example, pupils in Years 4 enjoy thinking about the sights, sounds and feelings they would experience at the top of a mountain and on the shore and work energetically to create imaginative poems.

Pupils are responding well to the school's approach of encouraging important key learning skills, such as resilience and how to manage distractions. For example, younger pupils enjoyed hearing about the Yeti who needed to work hard to develop his roar, and how they need to persevere when they find a task difficult. However, these approaches are in the early stages of development. Most pupils respond well to the verbal feedback they receive during lessons. As a result, they make improvements to their work, and this supports them to make progress. Most pupils reflect well on their learning and on the learning of others, for example, to check whether their work meets the expectations set out prior to the task. However, a few do not take care with the presentation of their written work.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum meets the needs of pupils and uses the community well to help pupils understand their locality and their heritage. There is a collaborative culture, where pupils share their views and ideas, and have beneficial opportunities

to influence the content of their learning. For example, pupils asked to visit more places in the local area, and this has been woven into different areas of learning effectively, such as a visit to a local mill linked with the Titanic disaster. Recent changes to the curriculum in light of national reforms have strengthened pupils' opportunities to make links across areas of learning and experience. For example, a grant to support creativity enabled the school to engage an artist to help promote pupils' creative skills alongside their understanding of diversity and historical events.

Teachers consider topics thoughtfully and plan learning that builds systematically on what pupils already know and understand. They ensure that there are developmental opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills effectively in different contexts. Staff and pupils create class themes that enable pupils to engage in critical thinking, problem solving and discussion about issues of local and national importance. For example, pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 consider the experiences of the Welsh people who emigrated to Patagonia, while older pupils discuss different views on immigration maturely. Staff encourage pupils to learn about their Welsh identity through projects, such as their 'cynefin' project and promote a positive view of using Welsh language during the school day.

Provision for personal and social education is effective in promoting the school's values and in encouraging pupils to think about their own and others' safety and well-being. Pupils learn about cyber-bullying and their global footprint, considering how they can live sustainably. Staff work well together to plan learning which will prepare pupils for their adult lives. For example, they foster pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles well through helping pupils to be aware of their own feelings and the need to take care of themselves and of others. They learn that strong mental health can be supported and grown.

Staff work hard to stimulate pupils' interest. They provide a wide range of interesting learning opportunities, which include trips to places of interest and support from a range of visitors to bring the curriculum to life. Provision for the youngest pupils enables them to develop their independence well. All pupils have opportunities to engage in learning both indoors and outside. However, as pupils move through the school, there are fewer opportunities for them to use the outdoor environment. There are a broad range of engaging extra-curricular activities that enrich pupils' experiences, such as craft club, reading for pleasure and sign language.

Most teachers engage pupils in their learning well, for example using thought-provoking videos and creative letters to interest pupils at the start of sessions. Most teachers have clear objectives for sessions that focus well on developing pupils' knowledge and skills proficiently. They share these helpfully with pupils and this helps them to understand the purpose of their learning. Teachers deploy support staff well in sessions, and these staff make a highly valuable contribution to the learning of pupils, supporting and questioning them effectively. Most teachers adapt learning thoughtfully and this provides an appropriate level of challenge that allows most pupils to make beneficial progress.

Throughout sessions, most teachers question pupils thoughtfully. They provide helpful feedback that supports pupils to address misunderstandings and develop their ideas effectively. However, teachers do not always address issues, such as incorrect spelling, inaccurate punctuation or weaker presentation consistently

enough. Most teachers provide pupils with suitable opportunities to assess their own learning and that of their peers. For example, they work supportively with pupils to establish criteria for how to complete a task. However, these criteria are not always helpful enough to allow pupils to consider how well they have done.

Care, support and guidance

The standard of care, support and guidance provided for pupils and their families is highly effective. The school maintains a continual focus on supporting and improving all pupils' well-being. A strong example of this is in the way the whole staff work together to identify and address individual pupil's needs. They work well with external partners, such as the educational welfare service and educational psychologists, to engage with pupils and their families. Leaders and staff monitor pupils' attendance robustly. They have developed good systems to ensure the safety of pupils and foster a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. As a result, the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Across the school, familiar routines support pupils successfully. For example, the welcome arrangements at the start of the school day help to settle pupils in readiness for learning, and at the end of the day teachers and support staff ensure that any issues that have arisen during the day are addressed before pupils go home. Teachers have a profile of each pupil that outlines their interests, how they like to be supported to learn and the things they are working to improve. These exemplify the detailed knowledge that school staff have of the individual characteristics of each pupil and help to support pupils' learning and well-being. The school recognises that families have a major impact on their children's achievement and build successful, trusted relationships with parents. Staff provide worthwhile workshops for parents that enable them to support their children's well-being and learning, such as family maths and early phonics.

Provision for additional learning needs is meticulous and effective. There is a clear and well thought out plan to allow for a smooth transition to new national arrangements to support pupils with additional learning needs. There is strong culture of inclusion, and this is a strength of the school. Leaders ensure that all staff are trained well to identify and support the individual and emotional needs of pupils. Learning support staff know and understand the needs of pupils they support highly successfully. They work skilfully with pupils, helping them to take part in learning and improving their wellbeing. There are regular and well-planned progress meetings between teachers, learners and the additional learning needs co-ordinator. This ensures that the needs of pupils are identified, supported and tracked successfully, enabling pupils with additional learning needs to make good and sometimes very good progress from where they start.

The school curriculum supports pupils' health and well-being successfully. For example, staff implement a whole school approach to well-being, tailored to the different needs of each class. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion. For instance, older pupils learn to challenge any preconceptions they may have about gender and race and write about inspirational role models such as Ami Jones MBE. The school's Senedd

leads the school's work on human rights and helps to ensure that pupils understand their rights and responsibilities well.

Teachers ensure that pupils regularly consider values such as trust, honesty, kindness and respect through assemblies and collective worship. The school's ethos ensures that there are regular opportunities for pupils to explore their spiritual beliefs and find out about the characteristics of other religions. For instance, pupils learn about Diwali and religions such as Sikhism and Judaism. The school celebrates its Welsh heritage suitably. Staff arrange visits to the local landmarks and places of interest, such as Cardiff Castle and the Brecon Mountain Railway. In addition, the school holds events to celebrate St. David's Day, including an annual Eisteddfod.

The school's commitment to enhancing the pupils learning experiences can be seen in the way that staff have quickly returned to offering the pupils a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These help them to develop existing and new interests and include, cooking club and golf coaching. Through the many pupil leadership groups there are many opportunities for pupils to become active, informed citizens and influence decisions that bring about improvement to school life. Pupils are developing as enterprising creative contributors very well. Eco-leaders grow vegetables in the school allotment, selling the produce to parents to support healthy eating. They use the money raised to buy more seeds to grow more produce. Business enterprise projects run regularly throughout the school year and pupils use the profits thoughtfully to feed into new projects or to buy resources for the classroom.

Leadership and management

Leaders have a clear vision for the school that match the purposes set out in the new curriculum for Wales well. Staff, governors and pupils work in accordance with their agreed principles of being 'creative, consistent, collaborative' to inform actions throughout the school and in the classroom. For example, leaders expect pupils, teachers and themselves to collaborate supportively. These principles help to set and maintain high expectations of staff, pupils and leaders, which they uphold consistently. The headteacher leads the team diligently and creatively, supporting and challenging all staff to be their best.

In most cases, the school's strategic objectives focus well on meeting pupils' needs. Leaders collaborate effectively with outside agencies and other schools to help bring about needed changes. For example, leaders have set in place effective systems to monitor and support pupils with additional learning needs in line with national reforms. They have visited a provider with well-embedded practices to support pupils who have experienced trauma, and this has strengthened leaders' understanding of how to deal with these difficult issues. To date, leaders have considered the requirements of the curriculum for Wales well. They have supported all staff to have a clear vision and understanding of how the curriculum will look at the school and are continuing their work to develop progressive learning experiences that fit well with the areas of learning and experience.

The governing body supports the school conscientiously. Governors understand their role in the safeguarding of pupils very well. They support the headteacher helpfully, for example in monitoring the school's finances. As a result, grants, such as the pupil deprivation grant, are spent thoughtfully to benefit identified pupils. Governors have

begun to gather evidence of the school's performance suitably, for example by meeting with staff and undertaking a few learning walks around the school. They have a broad overview of a majority of the school's improvement priorities, but do not always understand these in enough detail to act effectively as critical friends.

Leaders have a detailed annual plan to guide their monitoring and evaluation work. This identifies an appropriately broad range of strategies for leaders and for staff, such as scrutinising of pupils' books. The headteacher has trained a few older pupils as a 'detectif dysgu' (learning detective) to support leaders in their evaluation work. They provide a learners' perspective on areas, such as the classroom environment, which helps leaders to identify ways in which they can make improvements that benefit pupils. Leaders use the outcomes of all evaluation work to decide on improvement priorities, which they take forward diligently. However, current evaluation practices and improvement initiatives do not always focus sharply enough on identifying what pupils can do and the progress they make in their learning. This means that it is not always clear how leaders expect pupils' skills and understanding to improve. It also makes it difficult for governors to understand fully this element of leaders' work.

When leaders identify specific areas for pupil improvement, they implement strategies effectively and to good effect. For example, when leaders and teachers identified a group of pupils whose attitudes to writing were poor, they worked highly creatively with the arts council to develop series of workshops based on a quest and a character called the 'leaf master'. These focused on developing pupils' oracy skills and their creative writing skills. As a result, the quality of pupils' writing, their enthusiasm, and their engagement in school improved well.

The school is developing effectively as a learning organisation that supports the professional learning of all staff beneficially. The headteacher, supported ably by the deputy-headteacher have developed a web-based professional learning resource that all staff access regularly. This provides them with easy access to mandatory training as well as resources and support to take part in wider research. They have developed a model for professional learning based around identifying, researching, investigating, evaluating and presenting staff's learning. This learning focuses helpfully on the school's improvement priorities and on pupils' needs, for example on improving strategies that allow pupils to collaborate in order to improve their speaking skills. Staff engage with these processes enthusiastically and they have a clear impact on improving provision at the school.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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' wellbeing, 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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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