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

A report on

Ynysfach Primary School

Resolven
Neath
SA11 4AB

Date of inspection: October 2022

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Ynysfach Primary School

Name of provider	Ynysfach Primary School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	179
Pupils of statutory school age	121
Number in nursery classes	31
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 21.3%)	24.1%
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 22.2%)	12.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	10/01/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	10/03/2022

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

Ynysfach Primary School is a warm and vibrant community where pupils and parents feel cared for and welcome. Pupils enjoy their time in school and are supported by adults who understand their needs and interests well. The positive relationships between pupils and staff encourage all pupils to show a responsible attitude in lessons and demonstrate excellent behaviour around the school. Pupils show a strong understanding of their individual rights and enjoy taking on leadership roles within the school and contributing their support for the local community. Because of these strong ties, many pupils develop their understanding of citizenship purposefully.

Most pupils make good progress in their learning during their time in the school and achieve well. Teachers plan suitable learning experiences that help pupils to develop their skills progressively. In the best instances, they link this learning to real-life situations that motivate pupils to work with focus and ambition. However, teachers do not always expect enough of pupils or provide sufficient scope for them to test out their ideas independently, including through practical activities in and out of doors.

Senior leaders set a clear vision for the school that combines strong support for pupils' well-being with a sustained focus on securing individual progress. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths but do not evaluate closely enough the overall quality of teaching to identify key aspects for improvement. Leaders listen and respond well to the views of pupils, parents and the wider community. Governors provide knowledgeable and committed support for the school and question leaders effectively.

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that teaching challenges all pupils to think for themselves and apply their skills purposefully

R2 Provide more opportunity for pupils to develop their independent learning, including in the outdoors

R3 Strengthen monitoring processes to focus more sharply on the quality and impact of teaching

R4 Provide a broad and progressive range of learning experiences that develop pupils' digital skills fully

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils begin school with skills and understanding at a level suitable for their age. Overall, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress from their starting points as they move through the school.

Nearly all pupils interact confidently with adults and other children. They talk enthusiastically about their learning and listen very well to one another and to instructions from adults. Many younger pupils enjoy speaking aloud, such as when joining in with a class story. Many pupils in Year 2 explain clearly what they need to do to when working on independent activities to complete their 'challenge passport'. As pupils move through the school, they build their confidence to speak in front of an audience and to structure their talk appropriately. For example, pupils in Year 5 speak with assurance when giving presentations to each other about internet safety.

Across the school, most pupils make sound progress in reading. Many pupils in the nursery and reception class listen to a story with interest. Most pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 extend their knowledge of letter sounds successfully and apply this to read an increasing range of words with growing confidence. By Year 2, most pupils show enthusiasm for reading. Most older pupils read a range of suitably challenging texts with appropriate accuracy, self-correcting when needed. By Year 6, they use a range of suitable strategies to read difficult words successfully. However, a minority of pupils are not always sure about the meaning of what they read. More able pupils read confidently and with fluency. They talk enthusiastically about the books they read outside school and their favourite authors.

Most pupils develop good writing skills. The youngest pupils start to form letters with increasing control and begin to write short sentences with suitable gaps between words. Most make good use of their developing phonic knowledge to spell simple words plausibly. Pupils build on these skills systematically in Year 2, extending the length and variety of their writing to include a short retelling of a familiar story.

Most older pupils analyse different forms of writing to identify specific features carefully. They apply this knowledge successfully in their own writing to produce independent work that is well-suited to its purpose. For example, pupils in Year 6 write persuasive letters to the Children's Commissioner for Wales to highlight the exploitation of children in the cocoa-farming industry. Many older pupils draft and refine their writing to make worthwhile improvements. They respond constructively to teacher's comments and use helpful checklists to structure their writing appropriately. More able pupils make very effective use of model examples to mirror stylistic features that engage the reader's interest successfully. Most pupils present their work neatly. Overall, the standard of pupils' spelling is good.

Most pupils develop their mathematical skills well. Younger pupils sort items by simple characteristics. For example, pupils in the nursery and reception class order different autumn leaves by size, shape and colour. By Year 2, many apply their knowledge to identify shapes outside, taking photos and creating a collage. Across the school, most pupils make good use of technology to reinforce their number skills

purposefully. Many develop the mental agility to use numbers confidently, for instance to round and to approximate correctly. Many pupils apply their mathematical skills effectively. For example, pupils in Year 6 calculate profit and loss in the context of their work during an ‘Enterprising Week’ and as part of their role in running the community shop.

Across the school, most pupils make appropriate progress in developing their Welsh language skills. Most younger pupils sing along happily to a variety of Welsh songs and respond correctly to a range of familiar instructions and prompts in Welsh. From Year 3 upwards, most pupils answer simple questions confidently and share a variety of personal information effectively. Pupils in Year 5 write and present poems showing good pronunciation and an increasing vocabulary. Across the school, pupils have a positive attitude to using the Welsh language and show a good awareness of the locality’s Welshness and culture.

Most pupils develop a variety of useful digital skills as they move through the school. Many pupils use word processing and presentation programmes usefully to record and share their learning. For example, pupils in Year 5, create interesting presentations on Black History and famous Welsh people that combine images, sound and information creatively to share their learning. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy working with professionals to develop their coding skills when visiting a local technology facility. Overall, however, pupils use and apply their skills with too little increase in sophistication as they move through the school and their understanding of spreadsheets and databases is limited.

Across the school most pupils make appropriate progress in developing their physical and social skills. For example, younger pupils develop cooperation and coordination through yoga each morning. Most younger pupils engage in directed group activities and tasks well. However, their independent learning skills, such as exploring, trying things out and testing their ideas, are less well developed.

A majority of pupils develop suitable creative skills. Pupils across the school collaborated in an art project to showcase their understanding of human impact on the environment by creating a vibrant mural from coloured bottle tops to highlight the effect of plastic pollution in the sea.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Relationships between pupils and adults are a strength of the school. Nearly all pupils feel that the school is a happy and caring place, where staff value their opinions and treat them fairly. They feel safe in school and know whom to approach if they are worried or concerned about anything.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and during play and lunch times. They are courteous to one another and show respect and empathy for other members of the school and the local community. For example, the ‘Siop y Ddraig Goch’ ambassadors contributed purposefully to the decision-making process when setting up this community initiative. They demonstrate a keen understanding of the valuable role they can make in supporting and improving the lives of others. Pupils take turns to work in the shop and to make products for sale. They have also increased awareness of the shop by creating a promotional video to attract customers from the

surrounding locality. As a result of these activities, pupils develop an ethical attitude towards enterprise and enjoy a sense of purpose in their learning.

Across the school, pupils have a sound understanding of their rights and contribute thoughtfully to discussions about fairness and equality. Many pupils, including those with additional learning needs, take full advantage of opportunities to be influential within the school. For instance, the Criw Cymraeg lead assemblies and take pride in their efforts to increase the use of spoken Welsh and to celebrate different aspects of Welsh culture. They have successfully raised the profile of the Welsh language throughout the school and act as effective role models for their peers.

Pupils value the strong emphasis the school places on developing their well-being. They value the range of activities that support them to settle well into their new classes at the start of the school year. For example, pupils enjoy taking part in yoga and meditation exercises. Pupil leaders play a role in looking after staff within the school. They select a member of staff for a well-being reward and announce the winner in assembly each week. This demonstrates the mutual support different members of the school community show to each other. Staff have responded well to this initiative and feel more appreciated as a result.

Most pupils know how to keep themselves healthy by being active and eating a healthy diet. Most pupils discuss aspects of digital safety in lessons and show a good understanding of the benefits and risks of online activities. They speak confidently about the positive influence of visitors who reinforce messages and develop their understanding further.

Most pupils display good attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic in lessons and listen politely to adults and their peers. Nearly all pupils settle quickly to tasks and display good behaviour throughout the lesson. They contribute to planning by sharing their ideas and views in their regular ‘EPIC’, everyone plans in class, sessions. Pupils’ ideas are incorporated into tasks that they undertake during the following month, both in school and for homework. Most pupils take pride in their work and respond positively to feedback from teachers, which supports them to improve the quality of their work.

Pupils are actively involved in the development of the school’s new curriculum. They enjoy participating in the varied enrichment activities the school provides during its ‘specialisation weeks’. These follow a particular theme and support pupils to make progress in relation towards the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales. Most pupils feel that these experiences help them to develop the attributes needed to become effective learners now and in the future.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders and staff work collaboratively with pupils, parents and governors to develop a shared vision for their curriculum. Teachers plan for learning using use whole school concepts each term that allow aspects of a common theme to be tackled progressively. These concepts have been selected to address specific elements of the new Curriculum for Wales that the school has prioritised for further development. For example, the concept of ‘Diversity’ focuses on ‘what makes me, me?’ for the youngest pupils and explores broader social issues such as race and identity in Year

6. This organisation ensures that learning is relevant to pupils and supports them to build their knowledge and understanding in line with the curriculum's core purposes.

Teachers provide a broad range of worthwhile learning experiences. They make effective use of visitors, celebratory events and 'specialisation' weeks to engage pupils' interest effectively. Teachers support for the development of pupils' writing particularly well. They use a consistent approach that help pupils to reflect, plan, draft and improve their writing successfully. Pupils benefit from regular workshops with a local librarian who nourishes their enjoyment of literature further. Teachers also plan appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their numeracy skills, for instance through assisting in supplying and running the community shop. Planning for the development of pupils' digital skills is less effective.

Nearly all pupils contribute their ideas about things they would like to learn. For example, each class has an 'Our Curriculum, Our Voice' display that highlights the pupils' ideas for learning in different areas of the curriculum. Teachers incorporate these ideas into lessons and into homework tasks that allow pupils flexibility over how carry them out. As a result, most pupils enjoy, and are invested in, their learning.

All adults relate well to pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants use their detailed knowledge of individual pupils to build a strong rapport that impacts positively on their enjoyment of school. They set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour and participation during lessons and around the school. They monitor and reinforce these consistently, making effective use of praise.

The learning environment is welcoming and vibrant. However, classrooms for younger pupils do not provide enough opportunity, to engage in hands-on, practical activities or for pupils to experiment and learn through play. Opportunities for pupils to develop their creative thinking and problem-solving skills, for instance through use of the school's extensive grounds for learning in the outdoors, are limited.

Teachers generally plan activities that build on pupils' previous learning appropriately. This ensures that pupils develop their key skills progressively as they move through the school. Teachers give clear explanations in lessons that enable pupils to undertake their work confidently. They show a sound understanding of relevant knowledge and concepts. However, activities are often over-directed and teachers do not require pupils to work with enough independence. As a result, pupils are not always challenged to think more deeply or to apply their own ideas fully. Teaching assistants provide valuable targeted support to pupils in class and when delivering intervention programmes. This helps identified pupils to make good progress.

Most teachers integrate the use of spoken Welsh effectively during lessons. Many include a good range of suitable vocabulary naturally in their speech. This gives the spoken language prominence in classes and helps to develop pupils' knowledge and confidence. Teachers make good use of the role of the Helpwr Heddiw who has time each day to ask questions of the class to support pupils' learning of specific language patterns. Teachers make good use of local walks, visits and visitors to promote pupils' understanding of Welsh heritage and culture. For instance, a historian and a librarian visit the school frequently to develop pupils' knowledge of local and national traditions.

Teachers have worked with pupils to develop a range of useful strategies that help them to reflect on their progress in lessons productively. Teachers ask a variety of appropriate questions to check pupils' understanding in lessons and provide pupils with useful verbal and written feedback. They identify what pupils do well and where they can make improvements to their work. Older pupils are confident evaluating their own and their peers' learning. Pupils identify where their partner's work is effective and show them where they could do even better. For example, in an art lesson, Year 4 pupils explain clearly what they like about their partner's painting and suggest something they could work on to improve in the future.

Care, support and guidance

The standard of care, support and guidance provided for the pupils and their families is a strong feature of the school. Staff know their pupils and local community well and leaders ensure that the school is a caring and nurturing place where pupils feel welcome and included. The school supports pupils' health and well-being successfully, providing a whole school approach, which enables most pupils to develop strong social and personal skills. For example, teachers make good use of focused 'specialisation weeks' to teach pupils strategies to develop their resilience.

The school promotes a core set of values consistently, through regular assemblies, lessons, and acts of collective worship. These values are strengthened through the strong focus teachers give to promoting pupils' understanding of their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a result, many pupils show a mature and responsible attitude and recognise the impact their decisions have for themselves and those around them. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to explore their own spiritual beliefs and to learn about a diversity of faiths. For instance, pupils across the school develop their knowledge of the traditions and festivals of the Christian, Jewish, Hindi and Islamic communities. The school promotes pupils' understanding of equality and diversity successfully, for instance through activities as part of Black History Month and through the school's curriculum.

The school has established strong ties to the local community. Staff are readily accessible to families and leaders are approachable when any concerns arise. They communicate regularly and invite parents into school to participate in enjoyable activities with pupils, such as pumpkin carving, and to support chosen causes like the annual Macmillan Coffee Morning. Leaders consulted with parents and community members to gather their views and ideas when making recent changes to the school's curriculum. This activity has helped to tailor the school's approach and improve parent's understanding of the school's aspirations.

The school has made creative use of community grants to launch a shop that provides valuable support to people in the local neighbourhood. The shop is open several times a week for parents and members of the wider community to buy staple foods and other items, including recycled school uniform, at an affordable price. Although the Siop Y Ddraig Goch is a new initiative, it is a powerful example of the strong social connection between the school and the village it serves.

The school has a vibrant Welsh ethos that is reinforced by the Criw Cymraeg who have been instrumental in raising the profile of the Welsh language and culture throughout the school. Teachers also provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to

take forward their own interests and ideas. For example, pupils in Year 6 suggested the community shop make pre-loved uniform available to families to support them with managing the cost of living.

There is good provision for the pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). The school has developed effective partnerships with agencies such as the autism and educational psychology teams. As a result, school staff benefit from useful guidance and expertise that helps them to meet the needs of pupils successfully. Support staff are appropriately trained and are deployed effectively throughout the school. They provide beneficial support pupils with a range of additional needs including access to a variety of well-run intervention and support programmes. Teaching assistants also give tailored support to pupils through small nurture and social skills groups that enhance their well-being and support them to achieve well in class. As a result of the school's comprehensive and well-planned provision, nearly all pupils with additional needs make good progress from their individual starting points.

Pupils and staff have profited from a thorough implementation plan which has enabled the school to meet the requirements of the national ALN transformation process efficiently. An experienced and effective leader has facilitated this change effectively and capitalises on suitable opportunities to enhance the skills and understanding of the whole staff team. As a result, all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, benefit from adults' use of evidence-based approaches that enhance their learning and well-being.

There is a robust safeguarding culture in the school. Teachers plan a suitable range of activities that develop pupils' understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe in person and online thoroughly. As a result, nearly all pupils feel happy and secure in school. The school monitors pupils' attendance systematically and provides effective support to minimise absence. This means that nearly all pupils show a positive attitude to school and attend well.

Leadership and management

Leaders provide a clear strategic direction for the work of the school. This focuses purposefully on securing pupils' well-being and supporting their development as valued members of a caring community. Staff and governors understand their responsibilities well and share a strong commitment to meeting this aim successfully. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very closely together and present a positive professional model for colleagues. This example impacts beneficially on relationships across the whole staff. As a result, staff support one another well and show resilience as a team.

Leaders plan appropriately for the school's development. They align specific improvements to national and local priorities to ensure that these meet the needs of pupils. For example, staff have worked together to refine the provision for pupils with ALN effectively. Leaders make worthwhile use of training to develop the skills and knowledge of all staff and this has improved provision for all pupils. Leaders provide regular opportunities for staff to engage in professional learning during staff meetings and through participation in school-based training days. This enables them to share expertise and develop a common understanding of planned changes to teaching and

learning. However, arrangements for staff to engage with other professionals from beyond the school are at an early stage of development.

Leaders carry out a broad range of evidence gathering to inform their evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have also consulted widely in preparing for the new curriculum. Leaders use these findings to plan appropriate initiatives to support staff and pupils to realise the school's renewed vision. For instance, leaders have identified the need to develop pupils' thinking skills and teachers are trialling methods to encourage pupils to reflect on the skills they use when tackling tasks in classes. This approach is beginning to impact on pupils' understanding of how to apply these skills in different contexts to support their progress in their learning.

Leaders monitor progress towards specific improvement objectives conscientiously. They carry out timely reviews and use a range of information, including performance data, to assess the benefit of this work. In the best instances, this monitoring is sharply focused and demonstrates strong impact. For example, the school uses its pupil development grant funding effectively to deliver literacy and numeracy interventions for identified pupils. These are well run and progress measures clearly indicate their effectiveness in narrowing the gaps in learning for targeted pupils. Leaders also listen to pupils' views on the benefit of initiatives and carry out surveys and reviews of pupils' work to inform their evaluation. However, they do not make enough use of the first-hand observation of teaching and learning to monitor accurately the implementation and effect of agreed changes. Because of this, leaders' capacity to identify and share effective practice, to secure consistency and to amend plans when needed is reduced.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's improvement goals. They consider the detailed information provided by the headteacher carefully and raise appropriate questions that hold leaders to account for strategic decisions effectively. They monitor the school's finances diligently and show a good awareness of issues on the horizon that may impact the school's future plans. Governors ensure that spending decisions match with the school's aims and deliver good value for pupils. Leaders and governors ensure that the school has effective procedures to promote the health and safety of pupils, such as through the promotion of healthy eating and drinking.

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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