

**A report on**

**Fairfield Primary School**

**Dryden Road  
Penarth  
CF64 2RT**

**Date of inspection: March 2025**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education**

**and Training in Wales**

## About Fairfield Primary School

Name of provider	Fairfield Primary School
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	None
Number of pupils on roll	279
Pupils of statutory school age	239
Number in nursery classes	18
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 22.9%)	15.9%
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 11.1%)	7.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	3.3%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	7.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2008

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/02/2018
Start date of inspection	17/03/2025

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](https://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

- a. The term ‘additional learning needs’ is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

## Summary

Fairfield Primary School is a friendly and inclusive school where staff ensure that pupils feel happy and valued. Because of this, nearly all pupils show respect for others, behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Staff consider the views of pupils fairly and provide valuable opportunities to develop pupils' leadership skills so that they contribute purposefully to the life of the school.

Teachers generally provide clear objectives for pupils' learning in lessons. Many use questioning to monitor and prompt pupils' progress beneficially. Overall, however, teaching in around half of lessons does not develop or extend pupils' knowledge and skills well enough. In these lessons, the pace of learning is too slow, and teachers set tasks that do not challenge pupils sufficiently. Consequently, during their time in the school, many pupils do not make the progress they could.

Teachers provide a variety of learning experiences that engage many pupils well. Many pupils develop as capable readers who communicate their views and ideas through their speech and writing effectively. However, pupils do not have enough opportunity to use or hear spoken Welsh and this restricts their progress. Teachers develop many pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts appropriately.

Staff are committed to securing the progress and well-being of all pupils. With additional support, leaders are beginning to make focused improvements, such as the work to improve the provision for younger pupils. Staff have benefitted from valuable professional learning to implement these changes, and this is impacting positively on their capacity to sustain progress. However, over time, leaders have not evaluated the quality of the school's work robustly. They have not addressed important areas for improvement, such as the inconsistency in the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of the school's curriculum, swiftly enough. Governors show strong support for the school. However, they do not have a thorough enough first-hand knowledge of the school to be able to challenge leaders effectively.

## **Recommendations**

We have made four recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Improve leadership at all levels and ensure that self-evaluation focuses closely on the most important aspects in need of improvement
- R2. Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils should learn, know and understand and improve teaching to ensure that all pupils make the progress they should
- R3. Develop a coherent curriculum that supports pupils' progress effectively
- R4. Improve pupils' Welsh language skills

## **What happens next**

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

## Main evaluation

Leaders place a high priority on ensuring that all members of the school community feel welcomed and valued. They have established a strong culture of inclusivity that is consistently modelled by all members of staff. This impacts positively on the well-being and motivation of nearly all pupils and is reflected in the strong support many parents express for the school. All staff have a clear understanding of their duty to keep pupils safe and follow the schools' procedures consistently. They respond promptly to pupils' personal and social needs. Because of this, nearly all pupils feel cared for and trust that staff will help them when they need support.

Nearly all pupils behave well. They show a keen awareness of the school's rules and are polite and well-mannered towards staff and each other. They co-operate well with their peers in lessons and when playing together. Staff provide valuable opportunities for older pupils to contribute to the school and its wider community through a good range of pupil leadership groups. For example, pupil leaders work with staff to improve the school's grounds and lead play and exercise sessions at lunch times to encourage pupils to have fun being active.

The school has effective processes to identify and support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Staff work together well to provide tailored support, including beneficial interventions, that enable pupils with ALN to integrate into all aspects of school life and to make, at least, appropriate progress from their individual starting points. Suitably trained staff provide beneficial additional support to meet individual pupils' emotional needs effectively.

The school is working with the regional school improvement service to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation processes. This collaboration is supporting leaders to develop more effective strategies to bring about the necessary improvements. Recent developments, such as the work to improve provision for younger pupils, are beginning to impact positively on the learning experiences staff provide for pupils.

Staff have benefited from valuable professional learning to implement these changes, and this is strengthening their capacity to make progress against the school's priorities for improvement. However, over time, leaders have not monitored the quality of teaching and learning rigorously enough to identify clearly what teachers do well and where teaching needs to improve. Consequently, they have not addressed inconsistencies in the quality of teaching or the rate of pupils' progress.

Responsibility for improvement is not shared effectively across the leadership team. This limits the school's capacity to bring about necessary changes swiftly enough. Leaders have not responded in a timely fashion to national priorities, such as the need to develop pupils' Welsh language skills or to establish a coherent curriculum that develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding systematically.

Teachers support many pupils to develop their literacy skills in English appropriately. Many pupils develop as attentive listeners and express their own thoughts clearly. Teachers enable many pupils to develop and use their reading and writing skills suitably in their wider work. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their use of spoken Welsh effectively. Because of this, pupils' understanding of Welsh is limited and the language has too little presence in the school.

Teachers have recently adopted approaches to teaching that enable many pupils to make suitable progress in developing their mathematical understanding during lessons. However, teachers do not support pupils to apply their numeracy skills at an appropriate level in their work across the curriculum and this hinders their progress. Teachers provide relevant opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their digital skills appropriately as they move through the school.

Staff plan a broad variety of learning experiences to support pupils' holistic development. Teachers use engaging hooks for learning at the start of topics and encourage pupils to have a say in what they would like to learn about. They reflect pupils' interests in the learning experiences and plan worthwhile opportunities for pupils to demonstrate and celebrate their learning following units of work. However, the school does not have a clear, shared vision for its curriculum that ensures pupils build their knowledge and understanding effectively across all areas of learning.

Teachers generally set clear objectives for pupils' learning during lessons. In a majority of lessons, they provide guidance that helps pupils know how to complete a task successfully. Many teachers use questioning to monitor pupils' progress appropriately. Where teaching is effective, they pause lessons to clarify misconceptions or to highlight what pupils do well so they can learn from one another. However, in around half of lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are not ambitious enough. In these lessons, activities often lack a strong purpose and teaching proceeds at too slow a pace. Because of this, many pupils are not challenged sufficiently to build on what they already know or to apply their skills at a level that matches their ability. This means that during their time in the school, many pupils do not make the progress they could.

The governing body monitors the school's budget appropriately. Governors have supported leaders to secure improvements such as increasing the overall rate of pupils' attendance. However, governors do not have sufficient first-hand knowledge of the school's performance to provide robust challenge to leaders.

### **Additional information**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.



## **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' 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

## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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**This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).**