

A report on

Blackwood Primary School

**Apollo Way
Blackwood
NP12 1WA**

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Blackwood Primary School

Name of provider	Blackwood Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	381
Pupils of statutory school age	292
Number in nursery classes	48
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%)	31.5%
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%)	5.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	6.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/05/2017

A report on Blackwood Primary School
June 2025

Start date of inspection	02/06/2025
--------------------------	------------

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

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

Summary

Blackwood Primary School provides pupils with an exciting and engaging range of learning opportunities that support them to make strong progress in their learning and well-being and develop as ambitious, independent learners.

Leaders and staff create a positive, welcoming and inclusive learning environment that values pupils' contributions, instils high expectations and develops their aspirations. Pupils of all ages are well-cared for, supported and encouraged, helping them to develop highly positive attitudes towards their learning and exemplary standards of behaviour.

The school offers a purposeful and meaningful curriculum that enables pupils to develop a comprehensive range of academic, social and life skills. Frequent opportunities to learn through activities such as woodwork, sewing and cookery prepare pupils well for future life. From the outset, carefully planned teaching and support helps younger pupils to quickly develop their communication skills. As they move through the school, most become confident readers, speakers and writers. Most pupils develop valuable Welsh language and digital skills and apply them capably in a range of contexts. The teaching of mathematics though is too variable, and this restricts the progress a minority of pupils make.

The school makes excellent use of its facilities, both indoors and outdoors. Leaders and governors work together purposefully to ensure that they use the school's finances successfully to provide pupils with well-resourced learning spaces. Governors support the school well and have a good first-hand understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Work to improve rates of attendance is beginning to have a positive impact, however too many pupils do not attend school frequently enough.

There is a strong culture of reflection at the school. All staff are committed to developing their own practice to enable them to best meet the needs of the school's pupils. There is a rigorous approach to professional learning and valuable relationships with external support partners. Staff use both effectively to enhance their skills and refine the school's provision.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Improve attendance
- R2. Ensure that teachers model suitable methods of calculation effectively and address pupils' misconceptions consistently

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Leaders have established an ambitious, creative and dynamic vision for the school that ensures that nearly all pupils develop as happy and inquisitive learners with a strong range of academic, social and life skills. The school has a purposeful and inclusive culture, ethos and strategic direction that permeates all aspects of its work. There is a robust and successful focus on supporting and improving pupils' learning and well-being. This helps to ensure that most pupils make at least strong progress from their starting points.

School leaders set and model high expectations for all. Throughout the school, staff and pupils embody these expectations and demonstrate them purposefully in their conduct, interactions and work. The school distributes leadership roles to impressive and impactful effect. Leaders at all levels understand their roles fully and embrace the opportunities they have to meet pupils' needs and bring about improvement. They have successfully developed a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration which has a notable impact on staff well-being and the overall quality of provision.

Spotlight: Developing a culture of continuous and sustainable improvement

The school has a thoughtful and effective approach to improvement, based on honest and collaborative self-evaluation and high-quality professional learning for all. Staff at all levels understand clearly what the school does well and what needs to improve. This helps them to identify the most useful professional learning, both for individuals and the whole staff team. Leaders make staff development a high priority, helping everyone to improve their own work and, in turn, to support their colleagues. This joined-up approach leads to meaningful and lasting improvement across the school.

From the earliest stage, staff provide a well-planned series of experiences that support nearly all pupils to make strong progress in developing their communication skills. The youngest pupils listen attentively and develop their understanding of letter sounds quickly. As they move through the school, most pupils build on these skills successfully to become confident readers and articulate speakers who talk eloquently about their learning. Pupils benefit greatly from the structured approach teachers take to develop their writing skills. Consistent modelling by teachers helps most older pupils to develop and use adventurous vocabulary ably and to apply different forms of writing confidently.

Most teachers model spoken Welsh effectively. They make frequent use of lively games that build pupils' vocabulary and knowledge of key phrases progressively. Teachers make beneficial use of purposeful tasks to develop pupils' digital skills and, in general, their mathematical skills. However, there is not a consistent approach to how teachers model methods of calculation or address pupils' misunderstanding. This means that a minority of pupils do not always work with numbers accurately and make repeated errors as a result.

As pupils move through the school, teachers frequently provide meaningful contexts for learning and make creative use of the environment, indoors and outdoors. This strengthens pupils' engagement and their enjoyment of school.

Spotlight: Developing independence through practical learning

Teachers across the school plan tasks like sewing, woodwork, and cookery to help pupils apply and extend their skills independently. These activities successfully foster creativity, resilience and initiative. Most pupils respond well to clear expectations, staying focused and organised both when working alone and with their peers. Staff monitor progress closely, offering timely support and identifying next steps. Consequently, most pupils leave the school as confident, independent learners.

Most teachers provide useful feedback that helps pupils understand what they do well and highlights potential improvements. Pupils generally respond diligently to this guidance, making beneficial amendments to their work. Nearly all pupils are highly engaged and participate positively in their learning activities. From a young age, nearly all pupils co-operate and support each other well. Most pupils persevere with tasks, and many look for ways to overcome difficulties themselves when faced with a problem. Nearly all pupils have strong and positive working relationships with adults and their peers. The behaviour of nearly all pupils is exemplary. They are consistently polite and respectful to each other, staff and other adults.

The school provides an inspiring curriculum with beneficial breadth and depth across all areas of learning and experience. The school develops pupils' understanding of the broad culture, heritage and diversity in the local area, Wales and the wider world through a range of worthwhile activities and experiences. Pupils of all ages consider a wide range of relevant spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. This helps pupils to develop and demonstrate empathy and respect towards each other and celebrate their differences.

The high expectations of staff, well-planned authentic experiences and beneficial opportunities to learn about influential people inspire nearly all pupils and raise their aspirations. There are many opportunities for pupils to exercise and participate in sports and pupils further develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles when planning and preparing their own meals. There is a wide variety of pupil groups that successfully enable pupils to have a strong voice, develop their leadership skills and influence the work of the school.

There are beneficial systems in place to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Training for staff in implementing new ALN arrangements has been valuable and has supported the school to adopt new systems and processes capably, ensuring helpful support for pupils who need it. Overall, there is a purposeful culture of openness and collaboration between the school and families. Where needed, staff link well with outside agencies to gain specialist advice and help. This enhances the support provided for pupils with ALN well. Consequently, nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual targets.

Leaders monitor and track attendance appropriately. They have a clear strategy and initiatives that are beginning to improve attendance. However, attendance levels are too low, and too many pupils are persistently absent from school. There is a strong culture of safeguarding that ensures pupils are safe and happy when in school. Staff are well trained and have a good understanding of the role they play in keeping pupils safe.

Governors have a visible presence and provide leaders with good levels of challenge and support. They engage purposefully in self-evaluation, enabling them to develop a good first-hand knowledge of the school's work. Leaders and governors manage the school's budget sensibly. The school building and the extensive outdoor spaces are well-maintained and well-resourced.

The school supports the wider education system proactively and with a strong sense of pride. Staff embrace the opportunities they have to support the development of the next generation of teachers through the school's significant involvement in initial teacher education.

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)

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

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales