

A report on

Greenfield Special School

**Duffryn Road
Pentrebach
CF48 4BJ**

Date of inspection: May 2025

by

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

About Greenfield Special School

Name of provider	Greenfield Special School
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Not applicable
Type of school	Maintained Special
Religious character	Not applicable
Number of pupils on roll	185
Pupils of statutory school age	139
Number in nursery classes	6
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 Maintained Special is 46.6%)	43.9%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Maintained Special is 100.0%)	100.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	7%
Date of headteacher appointment	02/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	06/03/2017

Start date of inspection	19/05/2025
<p>Further information</p> <p>Greenfield School is situated on the southern outskirts of Merthyr Tydfil and is the only special school in the authority. It is a special school for pupils aged 3 to 19 with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). It makes provision for a wide range of ALN including severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties (SLD and PMLD respectively) and autistic spectrum conditions (ASC). Some pupils also have additional sensory difficulties of vision and/or hearing, and many have speech and communication difficulties. Nearly all pupils are from Merthyr Tydfil; two pupils are from out of the county and six pupils are looked after by the local authority.</p> <p>The main school is made up of three adjacent sites, one accommodating the pupils from the foundation phase. The second accommodates a mixture of primary and secondary aged pupils. The third accommodates pupils in Key Stage 4 and is within the Integrated Children's Centre which is next door to the main building. The school has a further off-site provision three miles away called Campws Maes Glas which accommodates the majority of its post 16 pupils.</p>	

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

Greenfield School is a joyous and nurturing familial community, which supports pupils' well-being and learning extremely well. Pupils make effective progress from their initial starting points across a range of important skills.

There is a strong and well-developed safeguarding culture at the school. Processes to record concerns are robust and staff have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities, which they carry out diligently.

Where teaching is highly successful, staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' learning needs and interests. They use this knowledge successfully to plan engaging and relevant tasks that are challenging and stimulating. In these lessons, staff have high expectations of pupils, the learning intentions are clear, and pupils make strong progress towards their individual targets. Most teachers and teaching assistants use a wide range of strategies and resources skilfully to engage and support pupils to achieve.

Pupils make strong progress in developing their communication and their independence skills during their time at the school. Pupils communicate purposefully using speech, technology, symbols and other non-verbal systems, which supports their independence and ability to access the curriculum effectively.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and purposeful, with a clear rationale. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' well-being, social and life skills. Pupils benefit from a range of valuable extra-curricular activities and visits, which enhance their learning further.

The school collaborates exceptionally well with a range of professionals to enhance support for pupils and their families. These approaches are particularly strong features of the school's work and contribute meaningfully to positive outcomes for pupils and their families.

Pupils have many opportunities to participate in and develop leadership roles at school and within the community, for example through the school council and the 'activity leaders' programme. As a result, most pupils feel listened to, and their opinions are valued. This leads to high levels of engagement and meaningful contributions to pupils' life at the school and within the community.

Greenfield School is characterised by strong, strategic, and compassionate leadership that supports an inclusive and aspirational ethos. Professional learning, closely aligned with strategic priorities and tailored to meet the complex needs of pupils, is a well-embedded and responsive element of Greenfield School's work.

Governors play an active, well-informed role in the school, contributing to strategic planning and improvement.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Continue to share the highly effective practice to strengthen the consistency of teaching across the school

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Greenfield School is a joyous and nurturing familial community, which supports pupils' well-being and learning extremely well. Leaders and staff have an extensive knowledge of pupils' needs and interests. There are strong working relationships between the passionate and dedicated staff and pupils, based on respect and trust. This creates an extremely happy community where pupils feel valued and safe.

Across the school, leaders and staff create welcoming and positive learning environments. They are highly effective role models who approach their work with energy and humour. As a result, nearly all pupils engage in learning with enthusiasm and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.

There is a strong and well-developed safeguarding culture at the school. Processes to record concerns are robust and staff have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities which they carry out diligently. Staff are supported through a well-established professional development programme to ensure that they remain highly skilled. The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of purposeful opportunities to develop their understanding of their rights and of how to keep themselves safe.

Effective teaching and skill development

In most cases, where teaching is highly successful, staff have a detailed understanding of pupils' learning needs and interests. They use this knowledge successfully to plan engaging and relevant tasks that are challenging and stimulating. They set pupils beneficial, personalised targets to enable them to improve and develop important skills. In these lessons, staff have high expectations of pupils, the learning intentions are clear, and pupils make strong progress towards their individual targets.

Most teachers and teaching assistants use a wide range of strategies and resources skilfully to engage and support pupils to achieve. Staff adapt learning tasks and resources creatively to respond sensitively to pupils' changing needs and behaviours. In most cases, teachers' planning relates closely to the learning outcomes captured in pupils' Individual Development Plans (IDPs). This approach supports pupils very effectively to make progress in those areas that promote their wider personal and skills development.

Class routines are well established and provide valuable stability in most classes. Transition from one activity to another is well managed. As a result, most pupils know, understand and follow classroom routines and expectations readily. This supports pupils to participate fully in their learning.

A dedicated team of teaching assistants diligently support the teachers to provide seamless provision during the day. This helps pupils to participate fully in their learning and achieve their individual targets over time.

Staff assess pupils' progress effectively through beneficial individual pupil learning journeys. These are linked to the 'what matters' statements in the curriculum for Wales, next steps in learning and individual pupils' IDP objectives. The school's tracking system is robust and generates important data about pupil progress, which is used appropriately to plan the next steps in learning for individual pupils. As a result, most pupils across the school make strong progress from their starting points in developing important skills during their time at the school.

The school has established a comprehensive, whole-school approach to communication, resulting in most pupils making strong progress in developing their preferred methods of communication. Pupils communicate purposefully using speech, technology, symbols and other non-verbal systems, which supports their independence and ability to access the curriculum effectively.

Pupils make strong progress in developing their independence skills during their time at the school. For example, they use money independently in authentic situations, budgeting when shopping for ingredients to make food for homeless people in the community. Following weekly class visits to the local crown green bowling club, a few pupils have become members and participate in competitions, including at a national level. These opportunities make a valuable contribution in developing pupils' social skills, ensuring that they are an integral part of the local community.

There is a structured and progressive approach to reading across the school. Younger pupils engage with stories enthusiastically, while older and more able pupils develop inference, prediction, and retrieval skills. Many articulate their views confidently and refer to text to justify their opinions. At Maes Glas, pupils demonstrate a particularly strong engagement with reading, including enjoyment of specific genres.

Writing and mark-making skills develop well across the school. Most pupils improve their fine and gross motor skills over time. Older pupils produce extended pieces of writing using a range of literary devices effectively, such as alliteration and triplets.

Teachers provide well-planned opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in both structured and real-life contexts. Younger pupils count, sort, and match, while older pupils construct and interpret data using tally charts, pictograms, and bar charts. They also apply their skills purposefully in practical contexts, such as calculating costs and change in a shopping scenario.

Pupils' digital skills are developed progressively and in line with their ability. They engage with a variety of tools from switches and basic communication aids to more complex tasks, such as co-ordinating digital presentations during assemblies.

Pupils engage confidently with the Welsh language, using incidental Welsh in everyday contexts. More able pupils use Welsh vocabulary within their learning across the curriculum, for example in their thematic work on 'Around the World in Eighty Days'.

Pupils demonstrate strong creativity and problem-solving skills, applying their learning to real-life and immersive experiences. They create expressive artwork linked to cultural celebrations, participate successfully in national music accreditations, and gain Duke of Edinburgh Awards at bronze, silver and gold levels. These experiences support the development of skills such as planning, organisation, and resilience.

The school very successfully celebrates pupils' achievements throughout the year. Weekly assemblies, for example, are used to very good effect, where the whole school gathers and celebrates the successes of pupils along with the school mascot, Dewi Dragon. Celebration assemblies are led expertly by older pupils who use signing effectively to support pupil participation. Pupils and staff engage in assemblies with infectious enthusiasm, singing with gusto.

Curriculum delivery

Leaders at all levels articulate a clear vision for curriculum delivery, which is aspirational for all pupils. The curriculum is broad, balanced and purposeful, with a clear rationale. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' well-being, social and life skills.

The school's creative and effective approaches to the design of the curriculum are a notable strength of the school's work and meet the needs of all pupils exceptionally well. The school implements a highly effective pupil centred approach to planning the curriculum. Skilled teaching staff plan programmes of learning with great care, adapting their planning as necessary to take account of pupils' individual needs and abilities.

In collaboration with all staff, pupils and parents and carers, leaders have carefully designed a curriculum to meet the needs of pupils at Greenfield School. Built around developing pupils' sense of belonging, the school provides a purposeful curriculum that is based firmly in the pupils' local area of Merthyr Tydfil and also reflects the diverse nature of Wales and the wider world.

There are beneficial plans in place to develop relationships and sexuality education (RSE), which meet the needs and developmental stage of pupils successfully. As a result of the trusting relationships between pupils and staff, pupils learn how to communicate their needs and develop their awareness of personal self-care and hygiene. When appropriate to do so, older pupils learn about their emotional, physical and sexual health. Pupils learn about making choices that keep them safe and develop the skills to minimise risks and seek help.

The school has developed a comprehensive religion, values and ethics (RVE) scheme of work, which benefits all pupils. During their time at the school, pupils learn to act with kindness and compassion. They develop their awareness of the diversity of family and friends. Pupils develop inclusive behaviours that show respect for others. The school plans effectively for teaching pupils about the history and experiences of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities and LGBTQ+ people.

The curriculum provides numerous opportunities for pupils to learn to develop healthy lifestyle choices. For example, older pupils work in 'Dewi's Diner', cooking and preparing healthy lunches. The curriculum encourages pupils to be resilient and prepares them well for their next steps in life. As a result, most pupils are developing into ambitious, respectful individuals who are aspirational about their future. This is a significant strength of the school.

Pupils benefit from a range of valuable extra-curricular activities. For example, during music sessions, a few pupils make strong progress in learning to play the keyboard successfully, accompanying singers and reading music accurately. There is a beneficial range of extracurricular experiences offered by the school, for example swimming, attending the local gym and supermarket and visiting Cardiff. All pupils participate in Christmas concerts and all events are tailored well to meet the needs of pupils.

Trips and visits make a positive contribution to pupils' engagement and well-being. For example, pupils enjoy participating in sporting activities at a local university and attending pamper days at a local college. The school is aspirational about all pupils developing as ethical, well-informed citizens of Wales and the world. For example, older pupils have visited Poland, Spain and Greece, promoting an understanding of culture and learning about sustainability.

Supporting pupils' additional learning needs and their families

All pupils at the school have additional learning needs and have either an Individual Development Plan (IDP) or Statement of Educational Needs. These plans have effective input from a range of stakeholders including school staff, families, health professionals and, for older pupils, those involved in supporting pupils as they plan to leave the school.

One-page profiles are used purposefully across classes. These ensure that staff know pupil needs and interests and support them to successfully create bespoke learning experiences and environments that motivate and meet the needs of pupils well.

Leaders have developed the roles of a range of effective specialist intervention staff that provide extensive advice and modelling to classroom staff. They add value to the school's provision through upskilling staff on communication strategies, emotional literacy approaches and maximising mobility opportunities.

Spotlight: Multi agency solution meetings and supporting families

The school collaborates exceptionally well with a range of professionals to enhance support for pupils and their families. Multi Agency Solution Circle meetings (MASC) enable timely, co-ordinated interventions and improve access to external services. Teachers attending these meetings commit to acting upon advice very promptly. As a result, pupil dysregulation and incidents of behaviours that challenge have significantly reduced.

Leaders at the school have established and maintained highly effective, family-centred support through clear communication, practical guidance, and strong partnerships with parents and carers. Greenfield's weekly Wednesday parents' group GRWP (Greenfield's Response to Workshops for Parents) are highly beneficial in supporting parents to understand the communication methods or behaviour strategies they can use with their child at home. These approaches are particularly strong features of the school's work and contribute meaningfully to positive outcomes for pupils and their families.

The school has an effective approach to supporting pupil behaviour. Leaders carefully track and analyse behavioural trends and use this information to make important changes. Teaching staff skilfully support pupils to develop a range of strategies to self-regulate and modify behaviour. Teaching staff anticipate challenges and explicitly model expectations. As a result, over time nearly all pupils improve their behaviour and act with kindness and respect.

Pupils' attendance

Leaders implement a range of successful strategies to target low attendance including links with the education inclusion officer. Leaders support parents and carers with regular communication about their expectations. This has a positive impact on increasing the rates of attendance successfully.

Pupil voice and responsibility

Pupils have many opportunities to participate in and develop leadership roles at school and within the community, for example through the school council and the 'activity leaders' programme. Activity leaders work alongside staff to lead sports, art and reading activities at school, at local primary schools and within the community. Pupils take great pride in being appointed to such positions. Further, pupils are given valuable opportunities to influence their learning. As a result, most pupils feel listened to, and their opinions are valued. This leads to high levels of engagement and meaningful contributions to pupils' life at the school and within the community.

Leadership

Greenfield School is characterised by strong, strategic, and compassionate leadership that supports an inclusive and aspirational ethos. The headteacher provides clear direction, supported by an expanded and effective leadership team that promotes collaboration, reflection, and continuous improvement. Structures such as Impact Enquiry Groups and the involvement of middle leaders, including Camau [curriculum and assessment] leads, contribute meaningfully to self-evaluation and the progressive development of pupil skills.

The school's ethos is firmly rooted in pupil well-being, inclusion and voice. Initiatives such as the 'Kindness Crew' exemplify how values are embedded into daily life. The school promotes strong community engagement and contributes to wider educational improvement through outreach and national collaboration. Collectively, these elements reflect a dynamic and forward-thinking learning community that meets the diverse needs of its pupils while contributing meaningfully to the broader education system.

The school operates a robust and evolving monitoring, evaluation, and review cycle that draws on a wide range of evidence, including stakeholder voice, enquiry-led approaches, and professional dialogue. This cycle supports purposeful reflection and aligns closely with school priorities, contributing significantly to sustained improvement. The approach to self-evaluation is increasingly collegiate, with growing leadership capacity and active involvement from governors and parents. Governors receive regular updates and contribute meaningfully to strategic planning through structured scrutiny and challenge.

Spotlight: Nurturing staff's professional development

Greenfield School's three-year strategic improvement plan reflects a clear and ambitious vision for continuous improvement and builds successfully on identified areas for improvement. Initiatives such as impact enquiry groups and collaborative self-evaluation foster a reflective, inclusive culture.

Strategic enquiry and international collaboration have further strengthened the school's reflective culture. Professional learning activities, such as peer-to-peer lesson observations and cross-school partnerships, have supported improvement in practice. Participation in an international leadership programme enhanced leaders' understanding of how to use data and other evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision and has reinforced the value of collaboration. These developments reflect the school's commitment to continuous improvement, inclusive education, and high-quality professional learning.

Professional learning is a well-embedded and responsive element of Greenfield School's work, closely aligned with strategic priorities and tailored to meet the complex needs of pupils. Staff benefit from a combination of formal training, informal learning opportunities, and international partnerships, with a growing sense of ownership over their own development. Leadership plays a key role in ensuring that professional learning targets contribute meaningfully to whole-school improvement.

Governors play an active, well-informed role in the school, contributing to strategic planning and improvement. They understand teaching, pupil progress, and well-being, providing effective support and challenge. Their financial oversight is sound, and they are committed to ongoing professional development aligned with the school's priorities.

Financial management is strategic and effective. The school works closely with the local authority to ensure resources are allocated appropriately. Surpluses have been reduced through targeted investment in staffing and class expansion. The school uses grants effectively to support improvement priorities, and financial decisions are carefully monitored through regular finance committee meetings. The school uses grant funding effectively to provide targeted support to pupils and families.

The well-established registered charity Friends of Greenfield have, over the years, raised significant amounts of money to enhance the learning environment and learning experiences of all pupils.

The governing body has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Over time, pupils develop a generally secure understanding of the importance of keeping healthy and safe.

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:

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