A report on

Palmerston Primary School

Pen-y-Bryn
Cadoxton
Barry
Vale of Glamorgan
CF63 2XL

Date of inspection: May 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Palmerston Primary School

Name of provider	Palmerston Primary School
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	n/a
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	none
Number of pupils on roll	232
Pupils of statutory school age	168
Number in nursery classes	37
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%)	22.4%
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%)	25.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	1.3%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.97%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/11/2016

| Start date of inspection | 19/05/2025 |

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

Palmerston Primary School is a highly inclusive and nurturing environment that provides a high level of support to its families and community. The headteacher is fully committed to the values of the school and works positively with staff and pupils to develop warm and caring working relationships. As a result, many pupils feel safe in school, and families feel well supported.

Teachers, including those in the school's resource base, support the pupils' wide-ranging needs extremely well. Many teachers provide bespoke opportunities for them to engage in real-life experiences that support them to develop their skills. Many pupils engage well in lessons.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes a suitable range of activities that develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Many pupils' digital skills are particularly strong, and they apply these skills well in a wide range of contexts. Overall, pupils are beginning to develop their confidence in speaking Welsh.

In the most effective lessons, teachers plan to support pupils to progress well. As a result, many pupils, including those who are vulnerable and those with additional learning needs (ALN), make at least the expected progress during their time in school. However, the quality of teaching across the school is inconsistent. In a minority of lessons there is a tendency for adults to direct the learning too rigidly. As a result, a few pupils are not always sufficiently challenged, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their skills independently across the wider curriculum.

Leaders evaluate the impact of the school's work well and have a good awareness of strengths and areas for development. Supporting the well-being of pupils, staff and parents is a high priority. Despite several recent changes in teaching staff, the school has strong, trusting relationships with its community. Families are very appreciative of the opportunities they receive to develop their knowledge and skills and make links with a wide variety of agencies. This is a notable strength of the school.

Leaders and governors allocate considerable resources to meet the high levels of need of pupils with ALN. However, they do not have robust enough arrangements in place to manage the school's resources. The school monitors pupils' attendance diligently. However, despite the school's considerable efforts, rates of attendance remain too low.

Recommendations

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

R1.   Address inconsistencies in teaching to ensure that all pupils are challenged appropriately and develop their independence

R2.   Improve attendance rates

R3.   Strengthen resource management

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Palmerston Primary School is a highly inclusive learning community that nurtures pupils so that they feel safe and valued. The headteacher promotes the school's values clearly and fosters an ethos of care. Most pupils respond positively to staff and value the warm and nurturing relationships they have established. These relationships are integral to supporting pupils with emotional and behavioural needs.

The school provides a very high level of support to its community and routinely welcomes parents and carers into the school to discuss any issues and offer help.

Spotlight: Effective family engagement

The school has a well-established and highly supportive family and community ethos, which is a fundamental part of its vision, and central to its work. To support this, the school collaborates effectively with a wide range of external providers. These partnerships help to build strong relationships with families and develop parents' and carers' understanding of a range of important topics such as internet safety, financial literacy, and effective parenting. In addition, the supportive role of the family engagement officer provides a valuable link between parents and carers and the school. Families attend school regularly to take part in useful workshops that support them with life skills and equip them to support their children's learning. The school's work in this area is a notable strength.

Leaders evaluate the impact of the school's work well. The headteacher has a good awareness of its strengths and areas for development. For example, recent improvements to the provision for teaching writing and applying numeracy skills have resulted in most pupils making good progress in these areas. In addition, the school has strengthened its feedback to learners and, as a result, most pupils make clear improvements to their work.

Most pupils start school with skills and experiences well below those expected for their age. During their time in school, a majority of pupils, including those affected by socio-economic disadvantage, make at least suitable progress from their starting points. A few make good progress in many aspects of their learning.

Over time, many pupils make good progress in developing their oracy skills. Teachers skilfully support the youngest pupils to develop their vocabulary through real-life experiences. By the time they leave the school, many pupils are confident speakers, extending what they say by using more complex vocabulary to support discussions about their work. Many pupils are beginning to develop confidence in their use of the Welsh language. Many pupils develop a suitable range of reading skills. Many of the youngest pupils develop an understanding of letters and the sounds they represent, using what they have learnt to begin to decode and read simple words. They develop a love of reading by engaging enthusiastically with familiar stories. Older pupils read a range of texts for a variety of purposes with clarity and appropriate intonation, to support their work across the curriculum and to read for enjoyment. However, older pupils' comprehension skills are less developed.

Many pupils develop a broad range of strong digital skills. They are able to apply these skills in meaningful ways both to support their learning, and to express themselves creatively. They can confidently use a range of software that enhances their learning experiences and communication skills. Many develop their physical and creative skills appropriately.

Across the school, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Where teaching is most effective, teachers provide authentic and purposeful learning experiences that allow pupils to build on their skills and develop their independence. In these lessons, teachers manage behaviour well and make good use of available adults to help to ensure that pupils are engaged and feel safe and supported. However, in a minority of lessons, particularly in the older pupils' classes, there is a tendency for adults to over-scaffold learning, and direct pupils too much. As a result, a minority of pupils are not always sufficiently challenged, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to progress independently in their learning, or to make choices about how they learn.

The school makes strong provision for pupils with ALN, including for those pupils who access the resource base. Staff are extremely knowledgeable and supportive, and work closely together to help identify pupils' individual needs and to provide appropriate support. They draw purposefully on specialist expertise to develop their provision to meet the wide-ranging physical and medical needs of the pupils in the resource bases, and the learning and behavioural needs of a large number of pupils across the school. The school's inclusive ethos is a particular strength. As a result, pupils with ALN make strong progress.

The governing body is very supportive of the school. Governors have strong knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development and provide a good level of challenge to leaders. They meet very regularly to discuss important aspects of the school's work and identify ways in which they can support the school in its self-evaluation and improvements. However, the school has a significant deficit budget that has increased since last year and currently there are no robust plans in place to manage the school's resources going forwards.

Despite the school's considerable efforts and the support they provide for families around the importance of attending school, the rates of attendance remain too low, and leaders do not account for the rates of persistent absenteeism well enough.

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

Over time, leaders have not been sufficiently robust in managing the school's resources. They make appropriate use of the Pupil Development Grant.

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

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.

Publication date: 22/07/2025