

A report on

Melin Primary School

Mile End Road

Melin

Neath

SA11 2ED

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Melin Primary School

Name of provider	Melin Primary School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot 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	257
Pupils of statutory school age	182
Number in nursery classes	42
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%)	44.8%
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%)	6.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	6.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	10/04/2023

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/03/2018
Start date of inspection	09/06/2025

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

Melin Primary is a welcoming, inclusive school where pupils feel safe and supported. Most pupils behave well and show positive attitudes to learning. Teachers manage pupils' emotional needs effectively and provide appropriate support to promote their well-being.

Leaders work effectively with a range of professionals to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and, as a result, most make good progress towards their individual targets. They collaborate closely with the pre-school setting to ensure a smooth transition into school for the youngest pupils, enabling them to settle quickly and make rapid early progress in learning.

The quality of teaching varies across the school. In the youngest classes, teachers use assessment effectively to identify pupils' next steps in learning and use this information to plan thoughtful activities that engage pupils' interests and meet their developmental needs successfully. However, although older pupils complete the tasks they are given in lessons, teachers do not consider pupils' next steps in learning well enough to ensure that they make the progress they should.

Most younger pupils make strong progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and soon become independent and creative learners. The progress older pupils make in literacy and numeracy is too variable. Across the school, pupils develop their physical, digital and Welsh language skills appropriately. Many younger pupils develop their thinking and problem-solving skills successfully and enjoy making choices in their learning as they begin to develop independence. However, the majority of older pupils do not develop a broad enough range of skills to support their learning effectively across the curriculum.

Leaders use a suitable range of evidence to identify the school's strengths and areas for development. However, leaders' evaluation of the school's work is not always accurate and does not support school improvement well enough. They do not focus closely enough on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Governors work closely with the acting headteacher to address the impact of poverty on families. They are beginning to participate meaningfully in self-evaluation but this is at a very early stage and governors' understanding of the school's work and the progress pupils make is limited. Overall, pupils' attendance rates are too low.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Improve the accuracy and effectiveness of self-evaluation and improvement planning
- R2. Improve the quality of teaching and assessment for older pupils to ensure that they make the progress they should in learning
- R3. Strengthen the curriculum to provide authentic, purposeful learning activities that enable older pupils to build on their skills progressively
- R4. Improve attendance

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

The acting headteacher works diligently to create a welcoming, nurturing environment for all. She is sensitive to the challenges faced by families, including those impacted by poverty, and takes effective steps to foster positive relationships. A range of worthwhile activities throughout the year encourages parental involvement, strengthening trust and engagement between home and school.

The school provides effective support for pupils' well-being and personal development. Skilled support staff provide appropriate interventions that help pupils develop resilience and strategies to manage their emotions. Teachers make purposeful use of indoor and outdoor spaces to create calm, reflective areas that pupils access to regulate their behaviour and emotions.

Leaders and staff work together to review and develop learning experiences but the quality of teaching and learning is too variable across the school. Where teaching is effective, teachers plan meaningful and engaging learning experiences that support pupils' progress well. They use assessment appropriately to plan purposeful activities that build on pupils' prior learning. They use questioning well to deepen pupils' understanding and encourage active participation. However, where teaching is less effective learning experiences often lack challenge, and staff focus too heavily on compliance rather than the development of skills and the quality of work. As a result, the progress made by older pupils is inconsistent. Many activities do not provide sufficient challenge or allow pupils to apply a broad range of skills at an appropriate level. The quality of feedback varies, and pupils do not always have opportunities to respond to feedback to improve their work.

Leaders use a range of monitoring activities to identify the school's improvement priorities. They have identified a few aspects of the school's work in need of development accurately and provided purposeful professional learning for staff. A focus on developing teaching assistants' knowledge of pupils' social and emotional needs has had a positive impact on pupils' access to learning and strengthened the whole school approach. However, the school's evaluation of its work does not accurately identify important aspects of teaching and learning in need of improvement.

During their time in school, most younger pupils, including those from low-income households and those with ALN, make strong progress in their learning and well-being but older pupils do not make sufficient progress in many aspects of their learning.

Most younger pupils make effective progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. They speak confidently and share their ideas clearly. They make good progress in reading and enjoy listening to stories, often retelling them through imaginative play. Many younger pupils develop their writing skills well. Older pupils generally continue to build on their oracy skills appropriately. A majority pupils become competent readers, but teachers do not provide sufficient challenge in reading activities to ensure that all pupils make the progress they should. Too often, older pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to build on and apply their writing skills purposefully or develop as confident writers.

The youngest pupils develop their early numeracy skills appropriately. By Year 2, a majority use their number skills to solve basic calculations. Many older pupils measure accurately and solve simple mathematical problems with confidence. However, overall, teachers do not plan lessons that meet older pupils needs well enough to enable them to make the progress they could in developing their mathematical knowledge and applying their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum.

Most pupils understand the importance of staying safe online. Many younger pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their digital skills through cross-curricular learning. By Year 2, the majority of pupils use a variety of digital programs independently to support their learning. Many older pupils continue to use their digital skills appropriately in their learning, but they do not build upon or extend these skills well enough.

Many pupils develop their physical skills well through a range of indoor and outdoor activities. They benefit from the learning opportunities they have when accessing the school forest area. Teachers provide a range of valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their expressive arts skills. Many younger pupils use natural materials imaginatively in their practical artwork and older pupils refine colour mixing techniques. Most teachers provide daily opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills. Most younger pupils count and name colours in Welsh and many older pupils develop the vocabulary they use in conversations.

Many teachers provide pupils with opportunities to learn about a range of world religions, but there are limited opportunities for pupils to explore and understand diversity, identity, relationships, and issues such as gender equity and race. Many pupils enjoy leading assemblies, using the opportunity to share Welsh phrases and sustainability initiatives. Their contributions help to promote fairness and justice and an understanding of children's rights.

Governors provide valuable support to the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. They manage school finances carefully and take purposeful steps to mitigate against the impact of poverty on families. They use grant funding suitably to ensure that all pupils have equal access to learning experiences. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's improvement priorities and are beginning to engage in self-evaluation activities. Link governors work closely with leaders to monitor attendance and liaise with the local authority and families to support improvement. Whilst this work is having a positive impact, overall, attendance remains too low.

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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