

**A report on**  
**Oaklands Primary School**

**Maes Y Deri  
The Oaklands  
Aberaman  
Aberdare  
CF44 6TF**

**Date of inspection: June 2025**

**by**

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

## About Oaklands Primary School

Name of provider	Oaklands Primary School
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf 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	205
Pupils of statutory school age	147
Number in nursery classes	34
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%)	26.1%
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%)	12.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2009
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	20/11/2017
Start date of inspection	30/06/2025

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](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

Oaklands Primary is a happy and inclusive school where many pupils enjoy learning and make good progress from their individual starting points. Staff create a caring and respectful environment where pupils feel safe and valued. As a result, most pupils behave well and engage positively in lessons.

Leaders and staff know their pupils and community well. They work together to provide nurturing support and build strong relationships with pupils and their families. The Learning Specialist Class (LSC) is fully integrated into school life, helping pupils and staff in this setting to feel included. These pupils make strong progress across all areas of learning.

The school has developed a purposeful curriculum. Where teaching is strongest, lessons are well planned, ambitious and engaging, and teachers use questioning and feedback effectively. In these lessons, pupils are confident, motivated and eager to improve. In a few lessons, teaching is less effective and there is variability in the delivery of the school's curriculum.

Pupils develop their oracy, reading and writing skills well, and most make good progress. They build sound mathematical understanding and in a majority of lessons where appropriate, there are suitable opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum.

Governors are active in school life and support and challenge leaders appropriately. Leaders, including governors, generally monitor many pupils' progress effectively, although they do not focus well enough on the impact of grant funding on the progress of pupils eligible for free school meals. While leaders have focused appropriately on improving pupils' attendance, too many pupils, particularly those eligible for free school meals, do not attend school regularly enough.

## **Recommendations**

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

R1. Develop teachers' understanding of the school's curriculum and approaches to teaching to reduce the variability in the quality of teaching and learning

R2. Continue to focus sharply on the needs of those pupils eligible for free school meals including improving their attendance

## **What happens next**

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

## Main evaluation

Oaklands Primary is a happy and inclusive school where many pupils make good progress from their individual starting points in all aspects of their learning. This includes the Learning Specialist Class (LSC) where most pupils make strong progress.

Leaders and staff know their school and its community well. They work together to build strong, positive relationships with pupils and foster a climate of trust and mutual respect. Most teachers create calm learning environments where most pupils are curious and eager to learn about the world around them and demonstrate resilience when faced with challenge.

Over time, leaders have taken a thoughtful and purposeful approach to curriculum design and are working well with staff to develop learning experiences rooted in real-life contexts. Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development effectively. The school provides a suitable range of opportunities for pupils to contribute their views and take on leadership roles, particularly in the older year groups. Many pupils engage positively in these groups, and several groups demonstrate a clear impact on school life. These pupils interact well with others. They develop empathy and demonstrate a desire to understand and contribute positively to the world around them.

Where teaching is effective, teachers create supportive classroom environments where pupils feel safe and confident to try new things. In a majority of lessons, pupils show a readiness for learning in response to ambitious and creative activities. Teachers use questioning and feedback effectively to deepen pupils' understanding and move learning forward. In these lessons, pupils are enthusiastic, responsive, motivated to do their best and most make good progress. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not always have a secure enough understanding of the school's curriculum to plan learning well. They do not always provide feedback that supports pupils to make the progress they should.

In most lessons, teachers provide a broad range of opportunities for pupils to apply their speaking and listening skills suitably. Many younger pupils speak confidently when talking to staff and visitors. Teachers model language well and set high expectations, which helps many younger pupils improve their vocabulary and sentence structure. Most older pupils speak confidently about their learning and share their ideas clearly with others. Leaders and staff promote a consistent and structured approach to teaching reading. As a result, most pupils read with confidence. They enjoy their reading experiences and make good progress over time. Generally, teachers plan carefully to improve pupils' writing through using purposeful activities that build pupils' skills sequentially. Many pupils make strong progress in writing as a result.

Many of the youngest pupils make a meaningful start to learning Welsh, building a bank of vocabulary and responding to simple questions. Nearly all older pupils respond to basic questions, although lack confidence in responding to more complex language patterns.

Teachers provide a suitable range of mathematical activities that support the development of pupils' core skills suitably and as a result, most pupils make appropriate progress. In a majority of lessons, there are opportunities for purposeful cross curricular activities that support pupils to embed their numeracy skills progressively, but this is not consistent in all lessons.

A majority of teachers plan meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills suitably. Most younger pupils can access digital tools independently. Older pupils use technology successfully for a range of tasks. They understand the importance of online safety, and many take part in promoting safe internet use across the school.

Leaders and staff have established an appropriate culture of safeguarding. The school has introduced suitable processes to improve attendance, and these are starting to have a positive impact on most pupils' attendance. However, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals remains significantly lower than that of those who are not eligible for free school meals.

Staff support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) effectively, including those in the LSC. Staff know ALN pupils well and create nurturing environments that promote inclusion and wellbeing. Leaders ensure that teachers' systems for identification, intervention, and review are responsive and effective. They ensure transition arrangements across the school are strong for all learners. Staff, including those from the LSC, benefit from professional learning opportunities that help them deliver wellbeing programmes and targeted interventions that support pupils' emotional and academic development suitably.

### **Spotlight: Promoting inclusivity**

Leaders work effectively to ensure that pupils and staff in the LSC are fully included in all aspects of school life. Pupils and staff in this class feel a strong sense of belonging and inclusion. Teachers in the LSC work closely together to develop a curriculum that supports pupils' progress effectively. They use a range of appropriate strategies and resources to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills effectively. In addition, staff provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their creative and physical skills.

Leaders consider national priorities when planning for improvement, including the promotion of the Welsh language. They use a sound process of self-evaluation to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Where they have placed a clear focus, such as on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, outcomes for pupils have improved. Leaders provide a range of purposeful professional learning opportunities for all staff that have a positive impact on pupils' well-being and learning. New staff receive useful support to understand whole-school initiatives. However, leaders do not always give enough attention to helping all teachers fully understand the school's curriculum and the Curriculum for Wales in relation to its teaching and learning principles. This leads to variability in the quality of teaching across the school.

Leaders generally monitor the progress of pupils appropriately. Leaders and governors use grants such as the Pupil Development Grant to plan the support for pupils from low income households. However, they do not always evaluate the impact of this support on pupils effectively enough to ensure that pupils from low income households make appropriate progress and attend school regularly.

Governors are actively involved in school life and take part in self-evaluation activity at regular intervals. These opportunities help them to understand the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors provide suitable support and challenge to leaders and act as effective critical friends.

### **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:

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