

A report on
Blaen-Y-Cwm C.P. School

**Blaenafon Road
Brynmawr
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 4BR**

Date of inspection: September 2025

by

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

About Blaen-Y-Cwm C.P. School

Name of provider	Blaen-Y-Cwm C.P. School
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent 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	243
Pupils of statutory school age	218
Number in nursery classes	25
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%)	32.7%
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%)	2.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.4%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	03/10/2022

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September 2025

Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/05/2018
Start date of inspection	22/09/2025

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

Blaen-Y-Cwm Primary School is a welcoming and inclusive community where pupils thrive both academically and personally. Leaders and other staff understand the needs of their community well and set high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. Staff provide outstanding care for pupils' well-being, which contributes to the calm, happy atmosphere across the school. Pupils are polite, confident and eager to learn. They respond positively to the high standards modelled by staff.

Teaching is consistently strong. Teachers use a wide variety of approaches, skilfully combining clear explanations with opportunities for independent work. They check pupils' understanding carefully and provide helpful feedback that supports pupils to improve their skills. Older pupils reflect thoughtfully on their progress and give one another precise and constructive feedback.

In the foundation learning classes, pupils benefit from rich opportunities to explore and experiment in well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas.

The curriculum is stimulating and meaningful and it builds effectively on pupils' interests. Provision for expressive arts and humanities is a notable strength, and pupils produce imaginative, high-quality work. The Welsh dimension is strong, although pupils' spoken Welsh does not progress well enough as they move through the school. Pupils' literacy skills develop well, with most pupils becoming fluent readers and mature writers.

Pupils make strong progress in digital skills and physical development. They understand how to stay safe online and demonstrate good awareness of healthy lifestyles. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is effective, with early identification and targeted support ensuring that most targeted pupils make good progress.

Pupils contribute positively to school life, particularly through pupil groups, such as the school council and the equality champions. Attendance is improving, including the attendance of pupils from low-income families. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support and work with leaders to manage resources. However, the school faces a financial deficit, and there is not yet a medium-term plan in place to secure sustainability.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Manage the school's finances more effectively in order to address the budget deficit
- R2 Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Blaen-Y-Cwm Primary School is a happy, family community. High-quality teaching and rich learning experiences ensure that most pupils, including those from low-income families and gypsy traveller communities, make strong or excellent progress in their learning. The headteacher, staff and governors have a good sense of the context of the school and the community that they serve. They ensure that it is an inclusive school and have high aspirations for all pupils.

Staff provide pupils with an exceptionally high level of support for their well-being. As a result, pupils feel well cared for and their behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, welcoming and courteous and move around the school with smiles on their faces. Leaders also place a high priority on staff well-being. This contributes to a positive school culture where everyone feels valued.

Adults develop strong working relationships with pupils and create a positive climate for learning. Leaders and other staff consistently model high expectations. These expectations are reflected not only in pupils' achievements but also in the pride they take in presenting their work to a very high standard. Staff act as good role models to raise pupils' aspirations and their understanding of the wider world. They use their own talents and interests not only to enhance the curriculum but to inspire pupils.

Spotlight: Highly effective teaching and learning

Across the school, teaching is consistently effective. Teachers use a wide range of approaches, skilfully blending direct teaching with opportunities for pupils to work independently. Teachers have very strong subject knowledge. This strength underpins much of the excellent teaching across the school. Staff also make exceptionally good use of questioning, pausing at well-chosen points to check for pupils' understanding and to address misconceptions swiftly. Adults provide effective, immediate verbal feedback to pupils, who then respond conscientiously, making improvements to their work. Older pupils' written reflections clearly identify aspects of their writing they have improved and the next steps they need to make. Their ability to provide precise, helpful feedback to each other is a notable strength

In nursery and reception, staff have a strong understanding of how young children learn. Across the foundation learning classes, pupils benefit from rich opportunities to explore and experiment in spacious, well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas. There are fewer opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6, however, to engage in learning in the outdoors.

Through regular monitoring activities, leaders and other staff collaborate well to gather first-hand evidence to inform their understanding of provision and its impact on improving pupil standards. They identify appropriate strengths and areas for development accurately. They prioritise where they need to make improvements within a continuous cycle of improvement. For example, leaders identified the need to make their curriculum rich, engaging and reflective of the school's heritage and culture. All staff engage in beneficial professional learning. Leaders monitor the impact of professional learning on improving pupils' standards and well-being.

Spotlight: A Stimulating Curriculum

The school's curriculum enriches pupils' lives and raises their aspirations. It provides them with authentic, purposeful opportunities to learn and focuses consistently on their needs and interests. Provision for humanities and the expressive arts is particularly rich, with plentiful opportunities for pupils to explore music and art in depth. Within these contexts, older pupils speak knowledgeably about themes, such as equality, diversity and identity. Their own artwork is imaginative and of high quality. The school's provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills in nearly all areas of learning and experience is a strength. The Welsh dimension to the curriculum is consistently strong.

The development of pupils' language and literacy is particularly good. Most pupils speak confidently, using a broad vocabulary and precise subject-specific terminology. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils contribute thoughtfully to class discussions. They listen attentively, explain their ideas in depth and challenge each other's views respectfully.

The school creates a positive culture of reading. Most pupils develop secure phonological knowledge in the early years, and this provides a strong foundation for their reading development. As they move through the school most pupils enjoy their reading and develop fluency. By Year 6, many pupils think carefully about how authors use language. Their spoken and written responses often show maturity and depth.

Teachers have a strong understanding of how writing develops, and they plan carefully for progression across the school. Pupils have many opportunities to write creatively and for a wide range of purposes, applying their knowledge of genres across the curriculum. Many older pupils produce extended pieces that are engaging and show flair. This reflects the influence of exposure to high-quality literature on their own writing.

Standards in mathematics are good overall, with most pupils making clear progress throughout the school. In the foundation learning classes, staff embed mathematical development successfully in real-life contexts. Teachers ensure that pupils revisit key concepts regularly to strengthen their understanding and design tasks that promote

problem-solving. Consequently, older pupils generally have strong skills that they apply successfully across other areas of learning and experience. At times, however, tasks do not always provide enough challenge for more able pupils.

Staff teach Welsh regularly and, in the younger classes, pupils develop suitable listening and speaking skills. However, as pupils move through the school, their Welsh oracy skills do not improve well enough. While older pupils use a wide range of vocabulary and sentence patterns in their written work, they struggle to recall these and lack confidence in their speaking.

Pupils make strong and sustained progress in developing their digital skills. They understand the importance of digital safety, and they articulate clear strategies for protecting personal information and evaluating online content critically. Through high-quality provision, most pupils make strong progress in developing their physical skills. They understand the characteristics of a healthy lifestyle.

The school provides valuable support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). There is an effective approach to the early identification of pupils' needs and provision of beneficial support. This ensures that most pupils make strong progress towards their targets. The school works well with a range of external partners to provide beneficial targeted support for pupils, for example those with specific medical needs.

Older pupils have the opportunity to be part of the various pupil groups. They use these roles to represent their peers and to support younger pupils well. However, the groups are mainly adult led and there are missed opportunities to develop pupils' leadership skills. Transition arrangements support pupils in the next stage of their development effectively.

The school grounds and buildings are secure, however arrangements at the start and end of the school day are a cause for concern with traffic and pedestrians accessing the car park at the same time. Due to the proactive work of the school to highlight the importance of regular attendance, rates are improving. This includes the attendance of pupils from low-income families.

Governors offer constructive challenge and support to school leaders. They play a positive role in shaping the school's strategic direction. Leaders ensure that governors are well informed about financial pressures. Together they agree which aspects of the school's work should be prioritised. There is currently no medium-term plan in place to reduce the school's financial deficit and to establish a sustainable financial model. Leaders monitor expenditure and impact of the pupil development grant suitably.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

A site management concern was raised during the inspection, and the local authority has been notified.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors do not manage the school's finances appropriately.

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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