

A report on

Millbank Primary School

**Clarke Street
Ely
CF5 5AL**

Date of inspection: September 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Millbank Primary School

Name of provider	Millbank Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	251
Pupils of statutory school age	175
Number in nursery classes	47
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%)	34.4%
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%)	9.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	7.4%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2019
Start date of inspection	29/09/2025

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

The headteacher provides effective leadership that drives a committed team with a clear vision that is focused on pupils' well-being and progress. This purposeful direction creates a calm, inclusive school culture where pupils feel valued and respected. Leaders distribute responsibilities strategically, which strengthens leadership capacity and secures sustained improvement.

Leaders implement a thorough self-evaluation process involving staff, governors and external partners. This process gives them a broad understanding of performance and enables them to bring about important improvements to aspects of the school's work. However, evaluation work does not always focus closely enough on the quality of teaching and learning. This means that leaders do not always identify and address inconsistencies in teaching. Leaders promote professional learning effectively. Collaborative work with partner schools improves pedagogy, particularly in early years, and enhances the quality of provision across the school.

Teachers plan stimulating learning experiences that reflect the Curriculum for Wales well. A literature-based approach to the curriculum helps raise standards in literacy and supports pupils' personal development successfully. Pupils develop good oracy, reading and writing skills. However, pupils' progress in mathematics and Welsh is too variable overall.

Leaders allocate resources skilfully to reduce the impact of socio-economic disadvantage and strengthen provision for pupils with additional learning needs. Bespoke and highly effective specialist provision enables pupils with complex needs to regulate emotions, build confidence and reintegrate successfully into mainstream learning.

A strong ethos of care and inclusion promotes positive relationships and good behaviour. Staff create a nurturing environment that supports pupils' emotional well-being and encourages resilience. Leaders communicate effectively with parents and the wider community, which builds trust and fosters a strong sense of belonging. As a result, pupils engage enthusiastically, achieve well and develop as confident, respectful learners.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Further develop evaluation and improvement processes to identify and address inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching and learning
- R2. Continue to improve provision to develop pupils' mathematical skills
- R3. Improve pupils' Welsh language skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

The headteacher provides effective strategic leadership. Together with a committed team of staff, she successfully implements a shared vision that focuses well on meeting the learning and well-being needs of pupils. Across the school, staff prioritise high-quality care and support, ensuring that all pupils feel valued. This ensures that relationships are based on mutual respect and that standards of behaviour and engagement in learning are consistently high.

There are appropriate arrangements to distribute leadership responsibilities. Members of the leadership team drive improvement effectively. They provide valuable professional learning opportunities and allocate financial resources well to help to achieve identified priorities. Recently, leaders have brought about improvements to the school's curriculum, the teaching of reading and notably to the provision for pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes.

When pupils start school, many have personal, social and communication skills below those expected for their age. High-quality provision for the youngest learners helps them settle quickly, build confidence and make strong early progress in their learning and well-being. During their time at school, they build on this positive start successfully and generally make good progress in most areas of learning.

Provision for the school's youngest pupils is effective. Recent collaboration with the local cluster of schools has led to the implementation of effective pedagogy. Teachers use stimulating resources that foster curiosity and independence. In the best practice, staff adapt learning effectively to meet pupils' needs, which raises engagement and enjoyment. This work is highly beneficial in the context of the school.

Staff have revised the school's curriculum to ensure that it provides engaging and relevant learning experiences for pupils. Teachers plan learning successfully around high-quality texts and novels. This approach is beginning to raise standards, particularly in literacy and personal development.

Nearly all pupils develop strong speaking and listening skills. Most younger pupils follow instructions and express ideas confidently. As they move through the school, they use increasingly rich vocabulary and discuss their learning thoughtfully. Consistent language modelling by staff supports this very well. A whole-school focus on reading has raised standards for nearly all pupils. Systematic phonics teaching builds firm foundations for early reading. As they move through the school, pupils apply their reading skills purposefully, for example when researching endangered animals. Regular use of the well-resourced library promotes enjoyment of reading and independence. Overall, pupils'

writing skills develop appropriately across the school. Pupils have suitable opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences. However, the quality of independent writing in a very few classes remains inconsistent. In a few instances, the overuse of worksheets is a barrier to progress and independence.

Pupils' Welsh language skills develop appropriately. Nearly all younger pupils use simple greetings and songs with enthusiasm. However, they do not generally build on these foundations as they move through the school. Many older pupils do not use the language confidently enough across the curriculum or in informal settings.

Pupils' progress in mathematics is variable as they move through the school. Leaders have identified mathematics as a priority for improvement. They have introduced a new mathematics curriculum to guide the systematic development of pupils' skills but this is in the very early stages of making a difference to learning. Currently, teachers provide suitable mathematical activities in lessons, but they do not always deliver these in a way that supports pupils to build on their prior learning or develop a secure understanding of mathematical concepts.

Pupils' digital skills develop well. Younger pupils use devices independently to support their learning, while older pupils handle data and produce digital presentations effectively. Nearly all pupils demonstrate creativity through painting, music and outdoor art. Teachers promote respect for identity and diversity successfully, helping pupils appreciate their own culture and that of others.

Across most classes, teachers use questioning and feedback effectively to strengthen learning. In the most effective practice, pupils act immediately on verbal feedback to improve their work. However, written feedback varies in quality and effectiveness. Most teaching helps learning to move forward at a lively pace and, in many instances matches the different range of needs of pupils appropriately.

The school nurtures a strong ethos of care and inclusion that has a notable impact on pupils' progress and engagement in school life. Arrangements to plan and deliver additional learning needs (ALN) support are effective. They ensure that provision for pupils with ALN matches individual needs well and supports good progress as these pupils move through school.

Spotlight 1: Effective additional provision

Leaders work strategically and creatively to develop the school's additional specialist provision. This includes the effective development and deployment of staff and resources. For example, 'The Burrow', enables pupils with complex needs to regulate their emotions, develop key skills and reintegrate successfully into mainstream classes. In a few instances, this makes a profound difference to pupils' school experience and progress.

Leaders and staff engage well with families and the wider community through a broad range of events and initiatives, fostering a strong sense of belonging. Parents consider staff as approachable, friendly and caring, and they value the prompt responses to any concerns. This trust strengthens relationships between home and school. Leaders communicate effectively with families about the importance of good attendance. As a result, attendance is very strong and has improved over the last three years.

The school follows a thorough self-evaluation cycle that involves staff, governors and external partners. This provides leaders with a broad understanding of the school's performance and enables them to bring about beneficial changes. However, self-evaluation activity does not always focus sharply enough on identifying the difference that teaching makes to aspects of pupils' learning and progress. Governors know the school well. They provide effective support and challenge, holding leaders to account for improvement and resource management. They work well with leaders to manage finances skilfully, allocating resources to reduce the impact of socio-economic disadvantage and to provide effective interventions such as emotional literacy support. They use funding creatively, for example the creation of a bespoke additional learning provision, at the school, meets the needs of pupils particularly well.

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2025: This report may be re used free of charge: (a) in any format or medium; and (b) may be translated by or on behalf of an education and/or training provider in respect of which this report relates into any language, in each case provided that it is re used and/or translated accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must, in each case (including in the case of a translation) be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 01/12/2025