

A report on
Ynysowen Community Primary School

**Aberfan Road
Aberfan
Merthyr Tydfil
Aberfan
CF48 4QQ**

Date of inspection: November 2025

by

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

About Ynysowen Community Primary School

Name of provider	Ynysowen Community Primary School
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil 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	311
Pupils of statutory school age	241
Number in nursery classes	43
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 21.7%)	26.6%
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 9.2%)	15.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.1%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2010
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2019
Start date of inspection	24/11/2025

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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

Strong leadership, high expectations and a caring ethos enable pupils at Ynysowen Primary School to thrive. Nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) in mainstream classes, those in the schools' learning resource base and those experiencing poverty, make at least good progress from their starting points. Leaders, staff and governors share a clear understanding of the school's strategic direction and work purposefully to improve provision, well-being and pupil outcomes. Governors know the school and its community well, provide good support and offer useful challenge to leaders.

The school has a strong track record of improvement over time. Its current priorities stem from rigorous self-evaluation which involves members of the whole school community. The school's approach to professional learning for staff is a notable strength. Staff access a wide range of professional learning purposefully linked to the school's priorities for improvement and regularly collaborate with local schools. This approach deepens professional understanding for staff and governors and enables older pupils to contribute to cluster-wide transition work.

Pupils develop confidence, independence and positive attitudes to learning. They engage enthusiastically in the school's broad, stimulating and cohesive curriculum, which is enriched by many opportunities for pupils to share their views. Recent work to strengthen outdoor learning is enhancing the curriculum and improving engagement and well-being but is not yet fully embedded.

Teaching is consistently strong, and staff create an inclusive learning environment where all pupils have the opportunity to shine. Pupils develop secure literacy, numeracy, digital and Welsh language skills through authentic, purposeful experiences. The school's effective whole-school approach to developing pupils' oracy and reading skills enhances pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

The school is a safe, nurturing community with highly effective systems for supporting pupils' well-being and additional learning needs. Early identification, tailored interventions and strong tracking ensure that most pupils, including those in the learning resource base, make strong progress.

Recommendations

We have made one recommendation to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Continue to build on the opportunities pupils have to use the outdoor learning environment to enhance their learning experiences across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Strong leadership, effective teaching, supportive working relationships and high expectations enable the pupils of Ynysowen Primary School to thrive throughout their time at school. Nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs in mainstream classes and in the school's learning resource base, as well as those from low-income households, make good or very good progress from often low starting points.

Senior leaders, staff and governors share a thorough understanding of the school's strategic direction, underpinned by the principle that everything they do should improve provision, well-being and progress for pupils. They use resources carefully to ensure that no pupil misses out on educational experiences because of the impact of poverty. Leaders' dedication to education motivates staff and creates a committed teaching team.

Governors are well informed, they know the school and its community particularly well and provide a high level of support and challenge to leaders. The knowledge they gather from school visits enables them to make informed decisions. The school has a track record of effective school improvement over many years that leads to strong outcomes for pupils and takes good account of national priorities.

The school's current priorities for improvement are clear and have arisen from a rigorous monitoring and evaluation process that considers a wide variety of first-hand evidence and involves all members of the school community. Senior leaders ensure that all staff experience a wide variety of purposeful professional learning.

Spotlight 1 – Strengthening collaboration through cluster working

Leaders, staff, governors and pupils benefit from strong collaboration within the school's cluster. Senior leaders work closely with colleagues to develop shared approaches to improvement, while governors regularly exchange ideas to shape effective responses to common challenges. Termly meetings enable teachers and support staff to share practice and learn from one other through discussion and reciprocal visits and observations. Older pupils contribute meaningfully to a cross-cluster group focused on improving transition to secondary school. This collaborative culture has strengthened professional learning and helped ensure that improvement activity remains closely aligned to enhancing pupils' outcomes and well-being.

Most pupils gain the confidence and skills they need to become independent, effective young citizens. They are proud of their achievements, their school and the community in which they live. They develop positive attitudes to learning and engage well in the broad range of interesting learning experiences on offer during and outside the school day. Their enthusiasm for learning is boosted by the meaningful opportunities they have to help shape the curriculum and their learning environments by participating in an extensive range of pupil voice groups. As a result of recent developments, including feedback from pupils, teachers have started to plan purposeful outdoor learning for older pupils. This has a positive impact on pupils' engagement and wellbeing but is not yet fully embedded. In addition, while the youngest pupils have the freedom to lead their own learning outside, not all pupils in foundation learning classes benefit from free access to the outdoor environment that would enable more pupil-led activities.

Consistently strong teaching, a broad, cohesive curriculum and exceptional collaboration between staff mean that pupils of all ages experience variety, challenge, and a sense of security in school. This gives them the confidence to try new things and take measured risks, whether they are developing strong physical skills through playing outside, or deepening their thinking skills when responding to challenging questions and using real conference equipment in a formal debate.

Most pupils develop a strong sense of self and the importance of their own well-being and that of others. Sensitive provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding permeates all aspects of the curriculum and school life. Skilled questioning and guidance from staff help pupils to extend their awareness of the expectations of society, and the cultures, diversity and traditions of their locality and the wider world.

From nursery through to Year 6, teachers and support staff place a strong emphasis on helping pupils to gain the literacy skills they need to function effectively in society. They plan a wide range of authentic learning experiences which help pupils to think, listen attentively, speak confidently and respond thoughtfully in English and, increasingly, in Welsh. Similarly, a systematic whole-school approach to teaching reading builds pupils' fluency, accuracy, comprehension and a love for language and books.

Spotlight 2 – A strategic, whole-school approach to reading

Staff identified a need to refine their approach to teaching reading to improve pupils' higher order reading skills and nurture a love of reading for pleasure. Teachers improved the quality of reading activities on offer to pupils every day to make them purposeful and enjoyable. Alongside this, pupil members of the reading ambassadors group visited all classrooms to consider provision for reading. Their feedback resulted in teachers making reading areas more welcoming and comfortable, and providing a more relevant and exciting range of reading material. Teachers report increased use of reading areas, a growth in pupils' interest in reading for pleasure, and more enthusiasm for guided reading and class story time.

Pupils' strong oracy and reading skills benefit their writing skills. Younger pupils develop an understanding of the purpose of writing as staff encourage them to use their early writing skills to make lists and write invitations when playing in the role play areas for instance. As they move through the school, pupils' writing becomes increasingly well-structured and imaginative across a wide range of genres, with good levels of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar by Year 6.

The school's focus on the effective, structured teaching of Welsh helps pupils to have a positive attitude towards learning the language. Pupils of all ages respond correctly to instructions and, as they gain confidence, they ask questions and extend answers using progressively more complex vocabulary and sentence patterns.

Leaders and teachers have considered the mathematics curriculum and teaching approaches carefully. Most pupils make good progress in developing a suitable range of mathematical skills, particularly number and calculation, and applying these at an appropriate level. The development of pupils' digital skills is equally effective. Teachers plan plenty of purposeful opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy and digital skills to solve problems and to explore and enhance their work across the curriculum with increasing sophistication as they move through the school.

The school is a happy, caring and inclusive community where staff and pupils show respect for one another, and pupils feel safe. Staff offer high levels of care, support and guidance. They know their pupils well and are sensitive to their needs. For example, where appropriate, pupils in the learning resource base work alongside their peers in mainstream classes. This is particularly useful when pupils are preparing for transition to secondary school. The school's effective provision for pupils with social and emotional difficulties, including a school-based counsellor, helps pupils to express and regulate their emotions. This contributes effectively to the excellent behaviour of pupils throughout the school.

The school's system for supporting pupils with additional learning needs is a strength. Staff identify pupils' needs swiftly and provide tailored support to accelerate their progress. This support, along with effective systems to track pupils' progress in mainstream classes and in the learning resource base ensures that most pupils with additional learning needs make expected or better progress from their starting points.

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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