

A report on

Dafen Primary School

**Lon-Yr-Ysgol
Dafen
Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA14 8LL**

Date of inspection: January 2026

by

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

About Dafen Primary School

Name of provider	Dafen Primary School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	102
Pupils of statutory school age	77
Number in nursery classes	10
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%)	38.3%
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%)	*
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	16/04/2018
Start date of inspection	26/01/2026

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

Staff at Ysgol Dafen create a nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, valued and able to share any worries. Caring and respectful relationships contribute to pupils' positive attitudes to school and help establish a settled atmosphere in which pupils generally behave well and show consideration for others.

Teachers plan learning that captures most pupils' interest and generally builds effectively on what they already know. They ensure that lessons have a clear purpose and use their detailed knowledge to support pupils to make steady progress across the curriculum. Younger pupils benefit from an engaging variety of learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors, that motivate them and meet their needs well. Staff adapt learning thoughtfully to ensure that the youngest pupils extend their skills and grow in confidence.

As pupils move through the school, teaching continues to reflect pupils' interests, and staff use effective questioning to help them think more deeply. Where staff provide too much direction during lessons, they limit opportunities for older pupils to make independent decisions, to learn from one another and to apply their skills without support.

Most pupils develop secure literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Teachers' consistent approach to developing reading and strengthening pupils' vocabulary supports most pupils to write for a suitable range of purposes effectively. Most pupils work with number confidently and use digital tools creatively. Across the school, teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to collaborate and solve problems together through their entrepreneurial activity. Many younger pupils enjoy using Welsh, but as they move through the school, most pupils' confidence and ability to speak Welsh diminishes.

Leaders have established robust systems for supporting pupils' well-being, meeting their individual needs and working with families. They evaluate the school's work accurately and implement sound actions to bring about improvement. However, leaders' actions to raise rates of pupils' attendance have not impacted sufficiently and these remain too low. Governors are highly committed and work well with leaders and staff to maintain a clear, shared vision for the school.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve pupils' attendance
- R2 Implement a clear and consistent approach to developing all pupils as independent learners
- 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

Staff at Ysgol Dafen provide a highly nurturing and supportive environment in which nearly all pupils feel safe, valued and listened to. They build strong, respectful relationships with pupils and use these effectively to promote trust, confidence and positive attitudes towards school. Pupils explain clearly that they know who to approach when they feel worried, and that adults respond quickly and sensitively when concerns arise. The school's calm and settled atmosphere ensures pupils generally behave well and show consideration towards others.

Teachers plan engaging learning experiences that stimulate most pupils' interest effectively. They demonstrate good knowledge about what they teach and have suitably high expectations for pupils' progress. Teachers ensure that lessons have a clear purpose for pupils' learning that generally builds appropriately on what pupils already know.

The youngest pupils benefit from a rich variety of indoor and outdoor experiences that are responsive to their emerging interests and motivate them well. Staff monitor the progress of the youngest pupils closely, adapting the learning environment and their teaching to support their next steps skilfully. This thoughtful approach helps younger pupils make an enthusiastic and confident start to learning.

As pupils move through the school, teachers consider what they are interested to learn about and reflect this in planned activities. However, staff often provide too much direction during lessons. This reduces opportunities for older pupils, in particular, to exercise initiative and to apply their skills without support. Teachers generally use questioning well to probe pupils' understanding and to encourage deeper thinking. They offer clear verbal and written feedback that helps pupils to improve their work.

Across the school, most pupils, including those who are eligible for free school meals, develop secure literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Staff use focused sessions to develop pupils' knowledge of letter sounds effectively. From an early age, they model vocabulary and use story maps, drama and verbal retelling to extend pupils' spoken language and to deepen their understanding of what they read and hear read. These approaches develop pupils' comprehension well and support them to apply relevant techniques to their own writing successfully. Consequently, most pupils write effectively at appropriate length for a good range of purposes.

Most pupils build a secure understanding of number and use this to calculate efficiently. Teachers make purposeful use of outdoor spaces and natural resources to develop pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts in practical contexts well. Most pupils enjoy creating digital content, and older pupils use coding, presentations, video and design tools

confidently. The school's curriculum provides suitable opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual and moral understanding and to deepen their knowledge of their rights and those of others.

Fostering collaboration through entrepreneurial activities

Across the school, teachers make particularly beneficial use of entrepreneurial activities to foster collaboration between groups of pupils. These opportunities enable pupils to draw on each other's ideas and to use their knowledge and skills to find creative ways to overcome problems. Pupils respond positively to the challenge these activities provide, persevering to make progress and experiencing pride and satisfaction in achieving a shared goal.

Staff place pupils' well-being at the centre of their work. Pupils who need additional support benefit from safe, welcoming spaces where they talk through worries and receive helpful guidance from skilled staff. This work helps pupils develop resilience and confidence so that most sustain their focus and motivation during lessons. Pupils take on a variety of leadership roles across the school, although the impact of these groups is variable, and pupils have too little opportunity to shape their learning or to influence wider decision-making.

Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) generally make sound progress from their individual starting points. Staff work closely as a team to identify pupils' needs and to plan effective support. They maintain clear, purposeful pupil profiles that highlight important information and support staff to meet pupils' individual needs effectively. Leaders and staff make beneficial use of professional partnerships with a variety of agencies to help families access timely, additional support.

Leaders implement a systematic approach to monitor attendance. They have recently begun to work with families to address concerns more directly but attendance remains too low.

Pupils have a strong sense of their Welsh heritage and identity. Staff use the local area effectively to strengthen pupils' understanding of how their environment and community have changed over time. Most younger pupils enjoy playing Welsh language games and show enthusiasm for speaking Welsh during focused lessons. However, as pupils move through the school, their progress in using spoken Welsh slows. Overall, the prominence of Welsh across the school day is limited and many older pupils are hesitant speakers.

Leaders set a clear and inclusive direction for the school. The acting headteacher guides staff purposefully and communicates a shared vision that staff, pupils, parents and community partners understand well. Work with the Dafen Forum strengthens this vision

and reinforces the school's place within the community. The school has developed positive working relationships with parents and carers. Most feel that the school communicates effectively with them, responds well to their concerns and supports their children to make good progress in their learning and well-being.

Leaders carry out an effective programme of monitoring to review practice and to pinpoint areas for improvement accurately. They use this knowledge to implement actions that impact positively on pupils' well-being and progress. Governors visit the school regularly to gather first-hand evidence and to strengthen their understanding of the school's strategic development. They challenge leaders appropriately and support them well. Governors recognise the need to put a long-term permanent leadership structure in place and have suitable plans to achieve this.

Overall, most staff feel well supported and value opportunities leaders provide to be purposefully involved in the school improvement process. Leaders plan professional learning strategically, linking training closely to school priorities and to staff needs. This has strengthened the quality of teaching, especially in reading and writing, where staff model and teach these skills effectively. Leaders and staff work well with other schools to further extend their expertise and refine new approaches.

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/carer 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.

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Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

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

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