

A report on

Rhydyfro Primary School

**Waun Penlan
Pontardawe
SA8 3BB**

Date of inspection: March 2026

by

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

About Rhydyfro Primary School

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| Name of provider | Rhydyfro Primary School |
| Local authority | Neath Port Talbot 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 | 147 |
| Pupils of statutory school age | 112 |
| Number in nursery classes | 17 |
| 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%) | 37.8% |
| 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%) | 17.9% |
| Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home | * |
| Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language | * |
| Lead partner in Initial teacher education | No |
| Date of headteacher appointment | 05/06/2023 |

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March 2026

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| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable) | 01/10/2018 |
| Start date of inspection | 09/03/2026 |

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

Rhydyfro School is a caring and nurturing school where most pupils behave well and are polite and considerate of each other. All staff act as positive role models and create an effective learning environment. They foster respectful working relationships with pupils and each other, and pupils develop good attitudes towards their learning. Leaders and staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Leaders work effectively with governors to promote a strong culture of safeguarding. Most pupils feel safe and many enjoy their time in school. Parents appreciate the engaging learning experiences and the caring and nurturing ethos the school provides. Although the school takes a systematic approach to raising attendance, overall attendance remains too low, particularly for pupils eligible for free school meals. Teachers have worked hard to develop a curriculum that successfully develops pupils' thinking skills. However, it does not always meet pupils' needs well enough to secure strong pupil progress in all areas of learning. Teachers plan real-life learning opportunities that interest pupils and engage them well. These experiences help to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills appropriately, in a range of contexts.

Many pupils, including those from low-income households, make effective progress in their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, pupils do not make sufficient progress in writing or have enough opportunities to plan their responses to feedback. This includes making decisions about how they will work, or how they will present or express their thinking. Teaching assistants are highly skilled at meeting pupils' individual learning and well-being needs. They support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) effectively and many make good progress towards their individual targets.

Governors play an active role in school life and make worthwhile contributions to the self-evaluation process. Together with leaders, they focus on identifying and addressing areas for improvement suitably. Despite this, leaders' self-evaluation does not always draw heavily enough on the progress pupils make because of the improvement actions the school implements.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve attendance
- R2 Sharpen self-evaluation processes to focus on pupil progress
- R3 Ensure curriculum design supports effective pupil progress.
- R4 Improve pupils' writing

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Rhydyfro School is a welcoming, inclusive school. Leaders provide purposeful leadership, foster effective teamwork and promote a warm ethos. All leaders, including governors, understand the strength and needs of pupils and the school community. Staff respond promptly and sensitively to pupils' emotional, social and learning needs. This helps to ensure that most pupils behave well. Parents and carers appreciate the support and guidance offered by the school.

Teachers across the school provide pupils with interesting real life learning experiences that engage them and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills successfully in many areas of the curriculum. These experiences capture pupils' imagination and help them to develop as positive, enthusiastic learners who demonstrate determination to achieve their best. Many pupils, including those from low-income households, make good progress during their time at school. They engage positively in all aspects of school life and develop strong attitudes towards their learning.

Leaders, staff and governors promote a strong culture of safeguarding. Most pupils feel safe in school. Leaders and staff work hard to improve attendance and engage constructively with outside agencies and parents to support this aim. Despite this, attendance is too low, especially for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Leaders and governors place a worthwhile emphasis on addressing national priorities, such as healthy eating and the Welsh language. Leaders plan well for staff's professional learning, connecting it successfully to the school's improvement priorities. They identify areas for improvement appropriately and implement actions to bring about success well. While leaders use a range of first-hand information to review the impact of improvement actions, evaluations do not always focus clearly enough upon pupil progress.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is strong. There are effective arrangements to facilitate early identification of pupils who may require additional support. Teaching assistants provide well to meet the individual needs of pupils, including those with ALN. This helps these pupils to make strong progress towards their individual targets.

Teachers establish calm, inviting classrooms and plan many activities that successfully provide pupils with opportunities to develop their collaborative working skills. Although pupils are progressing well as independent learners, teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities for them to plan their work and decide how to express and present what they have learnt. The school has worked hard to create a curriculum that is successful in fostering pupils' thinking skills. However, the design of the curriculum does

not always enable strong enough pupil progress, including in important areas such as writing.

Staff intervene effectively to prompt and question pupils to advance their learning and to clarify and extend their understanding. Where appropriate, teachers provide pupils with opportunities to review their learning and identify their next steps. Overall, they use swift, succinct and specific feedback, but do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to respond and improve their work.

Teachers are good language role models, and nearly all pupils develop as confident and effective speakers and listeners as they move through the school. Many younger pupils enthusiastically explain their learning. The school has developed a strong culture of reading. Over time, most pupils develop into confident readers who use their skills competently in their learning and demonstrate a clear understanding of the texts they read. Teachers use a comprehensive approach to the teaching of writing. As they progress through the school, pupils write in a range of styles suitably. When given the opportunity, older pupils write at length, editing and extending their writing to make improvements. However, overall pupils' progress in developing their writing is not good enough. While a majority of pupils present their work with care, using well-formed letters to produce a neat script, too many pupils' handwriting is not produced with enough care.

Teachers model pronunciation of Welsh vocabulary and language patterns notably well. From an early age, most pupils begin to use Welsh language in rhymes, songs and greetings and nearly all pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and using the Welsh language. They respond well to instructions given in Welsh and have a good understanding of the familiar Welsh phrases they hear and use.

Across the school, many pupils develop a range of mental mathematical skills which they use successfully in lessons when tackling calculations. When pupils are provided with the opportunity to apply their skills across the curriculum, many do this successfully.

Many pupils develop their digital skills well. As they progress through the school, they use an increasing range of applications confidently to support their learning in other areas of the curriculum. Most pupils are enthusiastic and highly engaged in their digital work and have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Most pupils apply their thinking skills well to solve problems, such as resolving dilemmas. They work well on their own and collaboratively and discuss different approaches and show resilience and determination to arrive at a solution. They are happy to return to their tasks and explore and amend their approaches, if necessary.

Staff model and develop positive relationships with all members of the school community. Most pupils across the school behave well and are polite. Teachers provide curricular experiences and assemblies which give pupils regular opportunities to reflect on and consider important features of social responsibility such as empathy. They learn about and explore important aspects of citizenship through the value of the month. These regular learning opportunities support pupils in becoming thoughtful and considerate. The school provides pupils with suitable opportunities to express their views.

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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